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THE

# LAKE RANGERS:

A TALE OF TICONDEROGA.

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BY W. J. HAMILTON,  
AUTHOR OF "GRAY HAIR, THE CHIEF," "ZEBRA ZACK."

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To render that period more clearly defined, in all its novelty and fierceness, is not the least purpose of this story.

The craft, as it shot out into the open lake, was seen to contain nine persons. It was a batteau of rather small size, pulled by eight oars. In the stern sat a young man, handling the steering-oar with a steady hand. He was a strong-limbed, active, sunbrowned child of the forest, towering above his fellows like a veritable Saul.

The crew of eight was composed of rough border men, various in ages, dressed in frontier style, some in the buckskin hunting shirts and leggings common at that period, and others in plain homespun. The dress of the steersman was somewhat richer than that of his men, being a sort of dark-blue stuff, with a handsome sword-belt from which hung a polished steel blade, in a scabbard chased with silver. Two richly-mounted pistols, of extraordinary caliber, were thrust into the belt over either hip, while a rifle, of the best manufacture of that day, rested between his knees.

The men were armed with knives and rifles.

Border men did not care for pistols. Only at rare intervals did they come to the close grapple, and then they preferred the knife or hatchet.

Just in front of the man at the steering-oar, who evidently was the leader, sat a man who was pulling the stroke-oar in a steady, dogged way which indicated character. He had an obstinate, bristling crop of sandy hair, a small but keen eye, and a whimsical mouth. His arms were long and full of power, for, when he pulled, the ridges of his powerful muscles could be seen rising in snake-like folds. At times he released his hold of the oar with one hand in order to grasp a ~~■~~ <sup>■</sup> ice of bacon which lay on the bench by his side.

"You are hungry, Jake," said the leader, laughing.

"Hungry," said he, in an injured tone; "ain't I *always* hungry?"

"I forgot," replied the leader; "but are you *never* satisfied?"

"'Pears not, from what I sez," replied Jake. "It runs in the family. You never *did* see jest sech another family; my father was a powerful eater; he could get away with more potatoes at one eatin' than any man I ever see. Captain Jones,

of the Sixtieth, was goin' to make a bet with Major Forsythe that the old man could eat a half-bushel of them at once."

"Did he do it?"

"Kain't say that he did. He come in while they was makin' the bet, an' he took Captain Jones to one side, an' says he, 'Don't you bet I kin eat *half a bushel*,' sez he, 'for I've jest had my dinner, and a big 'un, too; you bet I kin eat a *peck*, an' I kin do it.' An' he did it too."

Some one behind him gave utterance to an incredulous whistle. Jake fired up in an instant.

"Who whistled then?" he demanded; "let him speak right out. Thar ain't a man on this boat that I kain't lick ez easy as dowsin' down a bisket. Give it mouth. *Who* whistled?"

No one answered, and all the men were studiously intent upon their oars. It evidently had "whistled itself," as the schoolboys sometimes have it.

"Was it you, Bill Eagan?" demanded the stroke, looking over his shoulder. "Don't be afraid; what's a lickin' when you get used to it?"

"It wasn't me, Jake," said the man; "I never whistled in all my life—can't pucker fur it nohow, any more'n a door in a Frencher's shanty."

"Who was it?"

No one answered.

"I've got to lick the hull b'ilin' of you, I reckon. Come, be men; I've got to lick some one; I don't keer a penny who it is."

Some one laughed.

"You kain't fool me this time, Bill Eagan!" exclaimed Jake. "Now, look here; I kain't fight now; but, when we camp I kin lick you out of your moccasins. Don't say I kain't, I'll show you."

"Pull away," said the leader. "No quarreling."

"You don't understand, Major Seely," said the stroke. "My name is Jake Dowdle; that feller whistled and laughed at me—he giv me the lie, so to speak. Now, I ain't goin' to stand that from no man, I ain't. Don't stop me; who sez I'm wrong? Give it mouth."

"I say it," answered Major Seely, good-humoredly. "You

are wrong; Eagan is only in sport; he did not mean to make you angry. Can't you take a joke?"

"Let him say so," said Jake, "and he is saved; otherwise I shall feel compelled to lam him. It goes against the grain to destroy a feller critter, but sich is life. It must be did."

"It was only in fun," said Eagan.

"Then it's all right; don't do so no more, for it ain't healthy, I give you my word."

The men settled down to their work, feeling all the better for their little excitement. Jake's face wore an expression of triumph.

"I belong to a fam'ly that's *never* in the wrong," said he. "Ef any man but the major sez so, let him look out for squalls. Wrong! I don't know what it means; *common* critters can be wrong; I kain't. That's the way to live."

"You must have had a remarkable family, Jake," replied the major, who took pleasure in drawing out the man.

"Remarkable! I guess so. You may s'arch the kentry pooty cluss, an' I judge you kain't find no sech people. My father could tell when an Injin was round, chiefly by the smell. That's so; I ain't foolin'—he could tell an Oneida from a Huron half a mile away. That's what he could do."

"He must hev had a powerful smeller," put in Bill Eagan, who was a sort of rival to Jake. "I never see no sech man, myself."

"An' s'pose you never did, Mr. What-do-you-call-yourself?" said Jake, detecting disbelief in the tone of the other. "I sed he could do it, an' by Jinks he *could*! Now, who sez I'm a liar?"

"Silence in the boat!" enjoined Major Seely. "I repeat I will have no quarreling. Ha! What was that on thore?"

The bushes stirred near at hand. Every man grasped his rifle, and the boat floated idly on the placid bosom of the lake. The branches parted and a noble buck came down to drink. They were admiring his branching antlers, when a huge ball was seen to glance through the air, lighting on the shoulders of the buck. As this ball slowly uncoiled itself,

they could see that it was that terror of the American woods, the panther. The buck had fallen on his knees, and the teeth and claws of his terrible enemy were tearing at his shoulders. In an agony of terror, the harrassed beast shook off the assailant and made a dash at him with lowered antlers. The agile brute bounded into the air like a ball on the rebound, and dropped again upon the neck and shoulders of the deer. He uttered an almost human moan of agony as the sharp teeth met upon the spine, and the bones cracked under their strength. The next moment he lay supine, and the panther was lapping the flowing blood.

"Head the boat for the shore," said the major, eagerly. "We ought to get that fellow. I'll give five guineas for his ears."

"Steady!" said Jake. "Let me git a shot at him, an' you kin have his ears, an' I'll take the five guineas. Thar. Cease pullin'."

The boat was quiet again, at about a hundred and fifty yards from the bank. Jake took up his rifle, and drew a fine bead on the panther, as he lay half concealed by the body of the slain buck. Then the rifle spoke. There were few better shots in that section than Jake, but at the moment he pulled trigger, some one rocked the batteau slightly—not enough to cause him to miss the animal altogether, but sufficiently to cause the bullet to deviate a little from the point aimed at. The ball struck the animal in the fore-shoulder, breaking the bone into fragments.

"Give way lively," said the major, as the brute bounded into the air, and then rushed up the steep bank, uttering an eldritch scream. "We must have her ears. Pull hard."

Away they sped, the water foaming under the bows. The boat grounded with a shock, and the men leaped ashore. But, Major Seely and Jake passed at once, as by right, to the front, the major taking the lead up the steep declivity, directed by the track of blood. Reaching the crest of the bank he found his progress barred, for there, not ten feet away, lay the wounded and infuriated brute, gathering for a spring. The major drew his hunting-knife, and, dropping on one knee, waited with bated breath for the leap which he could not thwart.

It came!

With a lightning-like bound, the panther quivered for a moment in the air, and then fell upon the man, receiving the knife-blade in the body to the very handle. The major was so staggered by the shock that, losing his balance, he toppled over the cliff. His hand still clutched the knife, and the blade was redrawn as he rolled over. The now doubly wounded beast, maddened with pain and panting with the passion of its instinct for blood, grasped the man by the right leg, and the two fell crashing down the bank to the water's edge. Though momentarily stunned by the shock of the fall, the resolute man was quickly ready for a second stroke, and the clear waters of the lake were crimsoned with the gore of a third wound, which the major inflicted by driving the keen blade into the body from the back downward. But, so tenacious of life are all animals of the *civis* kind, that, had not the man's safety depended upon the knife-blows, he must have been overcome in the struggle. The panther loosened its hold on the leg, and, with a sudden pounce upon the fully prostrate body, opened wide its blood-reeking jaws to close them upon the major's throat.

His moments indeed seemed numbered. His eyes closed, but a fierce growl followed, as a voice cried :

" Hyar, ye pesky rip, jest give this chap a taste o' yer quality! Growl away and be durned to ye! Keep yer courage up, major, fur when she growis sne won't bite."

It was Jake, talking and maneuvering to attract the panther's attention.

The beast, flattening itself on the major's breast, her eyes glittering like lamps and her tail lashing the water, prepared for a spring upon her new foe.

" Don't move a finger, major, fur yer life—stand back, men," he shouted ; " ye'll fix the major ef ye come up now."

Then he uttered a mimic growl, which was answered by the panther's crashing its jaws together in rage, while her hot breath swept over the officer's face like a stream of steam.

" Bah, ye devil's kitten, I'll have yer skin fur a bed-blanket —ye bet!"

Dropping on his hands and knees, the ranger approached "on all fours" to within ten feet of the panther, pushing his

rifle before him but keeping his knife in readiness for the expected spring. At ten feet he paused.

"Still, now, major; don't move a muscle!"

The rifle was raised with a motion so sudden that the words were scarcely uttered when the report reverberated over the still surface of the placid lake, and a ball went crashing through the creature's brain.

The force of the ball seemed to raise the beast from the major's breast, for the panther's body stood erect on its hind feet a moment, then dropped over into the clear waters, still in death.

"Thar, boys, he that says he kin beat *that* is a liar that I kin lick out ov his leather. Give me yer paw, major. Much hurt?" he asked, as the officer arose to his feet.

"Not seriously, I think. The brute had a mouthful of leg, but didn't find time to dispose of it, I see," he answered, examining his limb. "Not a bone hurt, Jake—only a flesh wound."

"That's the talk, major! But, the critter come mighty nigh yer breathin'-trap afore I c'u'd git down to the beach ag'in. I rayther thought yer was a goner."

The men had, by this time, dragged the panther from the water, and stretched the huge body out on the sand. It was found to be a female of enormous size, measuring full nine feet from tip to tip.

"Wal, major, ye shall hew this hide fur a trophy. It's yer prowess—as yer calls it—that did the job, and it's yours the skin must be;" and Jake, seizing the brute's hind leg, proceeded in a skillful manner to "seam" and strip the hide from the massive body.

"No Jake, you are the true hero; only your bravery and discretion saved me. I offered five guineas for the ears. Here is the gold. Take it, Jake, with my gratitude and respect."

"I'll take the pieces, major, 'kase I know as how you'd feel hurt at a refusal; but, it's not fur the ears, min'l ye. I'll keep them fur remembrances an' good luck, an' may God bless you, major."

The stubborn old forester passed his arm-sleeve suspiciously over his eyes.

"How was it, Jake, that you failed to hit the eye when you shot from the batteau? Did you aim, purposely, at the shoulder?"

"Not by a cask full! I pulled trigger on the eye-ball, as poaty aim as ever I tuk, but some or'nary cuss jest rocked the boat the least bit, and the ball struck the shoulder. I most know who it was, an' why it was done. Ef I had missed the painter altogether, I'd have give him the stock of my rifle over the head."

He looked hard at Bill Eagan as he spoke. That worthy evidently was confused, and showed it. Not a man in the party but believed that the fellow had rocked the boat on purpose to thwart the aim; but, at the moment, all were looking intently toward the shore, and no one could say that Bill had done the mean deed.

"'Twasn't me," said Bill, turning away from the intent eyes of Jake. "Don't blame me for every thing; *that ain't fair.*"

"Who said any thing to you?" said Jake. "Don't be so quick to holler before you are hurt. Did I *say* you did it?"

"You looked as ef you thought so," said Bill, still averting his dark face.

He was a short, thick-set fellow, with black, malicious eyes, and a sneaking way. He was a capital scout, however—none better in the major's battalion, except it were Jake Dowdle, who was the scout *par excellence* of the garrison. Some asserted that Eagan had Indian blood in his veins. He had made a home in the woods, but in times of war or incursions he was ready to go out with the English.

"Thar, boys, thar's as poaty a hide as ever chief of the Chebunks slept upon, an' he war a great warrior, ye know—killed ten bears in one skrimmage, and eat 'em all fur one meal."

Some one whistled audibly.

"Blame my finger-nails but I ache to scratch the hide ov the feller what whistled then! A fout jist now would give me appetite enough to digest that painter's paw. *Who whistled I say?*"

"There, Jake, don't make a fool of yourself any more in noticing every expression of incredulity. Your stories are so big, sometimes, that I don't wonder the men whistle."

Jake eyed the major, as if astonished at the officer's audacity

"But, come, make a fire, boys, for we must have a feast out of this fat carcass. You, Jake, know the best cuts; so use your knife on the meat, for I am hungry."

Jake's anger was banished in an instant; he obeyed with the alacrity of one always ready for a feast.

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## CHAPTER II.

### ONE LESS.

THE men were not idle. Some brought wood and built a fire, others cut crotches upon which to cook the viands. In a few moments a savory smell ascended, and the men were seated in various attitudes about the fire, waiting for the meat to cook. Jake sharpened a stick and began to roast and eat small portions of the flesh, which he cut off for his own use from a piece at his side weighing nearly five pounds. The major looked on laughingly, as this large cut grew less and less, and finally disappeared. Jake caught his officer's eye as he swallowed the last piece.

"Laughing at me now, ain't you, major?" said he.

"I was wondering where you put away so much venison," said the major. "You don't stint yourself at your meals."

"I'm a powerful eater, that's a fact," replied Jake, not at all abashed. "I kin eat more at one sittin' than any man in the kentry. I ain't ashamed of it. I do my work well, whatever it is. Hold on, you stupid blunderer. Don't put that wet stick on the fire."

The last words were addressed to one of the men who was about to pile some green wood on the blazing fire.

"It takes you a long time to learn that green wood makes smoke," said Jake, angrily. "You ought to know it. You've been in the woods long enough, rot it. Git hick'ry when you kin—that's the best wood. Thar's too many Injins an' Frenchers in the valleys of the Champlain an' George, to make a smoke to guide 'em."

"Have you seen any signs?" inquired the major, anxiously. "I don't care to meet Indians with the few men I now have. We can't afford to fight. If we make a junction with Lieutenant Warner, then let them come. Where did he agree to meet us?"

"At a p'nt about five miles above this. We orter git thar this afternoon. An' while we are talkin' about it, I tell you for good I don't like the look of things. Injins? Thar's been Injins on this very spot within two days. Look a' that."

He picked up a flint arrowhead, cut in a peculiar fas-  
ion.

"St. Regis Injins," said he. "I know their arrowheads well enough, don't I? They can't fool me any more'n a rotten nut kin fool a squirrel."

"Any other signs?" asked the major.

"Moccasins enough an' to spare," said he. "Look here, an' here. Big Injins tramplin' round in muchness. Lordy! What a track! That feller kin walk on the water; you bet! Oh, what a flatfoot! Selina Jane! Never see sech a track in my born days. Looks as ef a young stun-boat had planted itself here. Not much of a track to follow, I judge."

The print of the moccasin was indeed very large. No-  
body but a man of large stature could have made it.

"Then you think the savages have been here?"

"Think? I know it. It can't be otherwise, you know. When a man has read the signs in the woods ez long ez I have, you kain't fool him, much. Oh, I've been on a trail onct or twice in my life."

"Then caution is the word," commanded the major. "Scat-  
ter those brands. When the French and Indians throng the woods it behooves us to be wary. You, Ned Weston, go to the east and look out for signs. If you see any, signal us from the point yonder. You know how. Bill Eagan, follow the lake-shore and meet us at three-mile point. The rest of you take the boat. Come on."

The two men started off into the woods, bending low, like hounds upon the scent. The boat, pulled by six oars, was pushed off. Keeping close to the shore, and pulling carefully, it made toward the point at which the first scout had been

instructed to meet them. As they arrived opposite the point they saw him coming on a run, without his hat, and evidently in a desperate hurry. Pausing on the bank, he pointed his rifle and fired. The sharp crack was followed by a yell of agony, and by cries of rage, which could only have come from the throats of Indians. Throwing down his rifle, the man plunged into the clear water of the lake, and for some seconds was not to be seen. Immediately after he appeared for a moment, and a scattered volley of musketry was heard. But, the head of the swimmer had already sunk from sight.

The boat was turned toward the shore, and the men bent to their oars. In a moment they hauled their companion, dripping and out of breath, into the boat.

"Ha!" said he, "I had a run of it. Pull for your lives. Don't wait for Bill."

Jake had already signaled the man in the bow to pull the boat round. As he did so, the savages began to show themselves along the bank, and a scattering fire followed. But, it did no damage, and at the same moment a loud voice on shore recalled them from the attack.

"This looks like business," said the major, as the men lay panting on their oars, out of musket shot. "Who are they, Ned?"

"St. Regis Injins, jest as Jake said," replied the man. "They tried to git me, but I caught a gl' pse of a snap sneaking in the bushes, and bolted. They put after me, and didn't catch me. That's the best I can say."

"How many do they number?"

"I didn't stop to count them," replied the man, with a grin. "Under the sarcumstances, I don't see how I could, very well. They were rather hot after a scalp, and I'd ruther keep mine. Judging from the yells, I should say they had a good err wd."

"Did you shoot one?"

"Yes. He was going to throw a tommyhawk at me. I didn't like that. I judge that a man hain't any right to throw hatchets without warning. What do you think?"

"You are right," said the major, with a light laugh. "It was impolite. Pull away, boys. There's trouble between this and the time we form a junction with Lieutenant Warner."

Under the circumstances, I do not care to fight. I hope we shall find Bill at the point."

"They kin go faster than we kin," said Jake. "We won't dare to land and take Bill on board."

"We must try it," said the major. "I can not consent to leave a man in danger."

"Bill knows the kentry," replied Jake. "He ain't in no more danger than we be, nor so much. You see they've got their eyes on us, and they don't know nothin' about him."

"That may be. But we promised to give him a chance to join us at the point, and we must do it. I never desert a comrade."

"But, he won't stick to the lake," persisted Jake. "He won't dare to do it. He's in hidin' somewhar this very moment, don't you see? He heard the Indian yells and got to kiver, as any scout would do. What's the sense of reskin' our lives by tryin' to land."

"Perhaps they won't follow us?" said the major.

"Perhaps I don't like br'iled venison?" added Jake, in derision. "I tell you they will. They ain't out for nothin' else. Oh, git out? Don't tell me they ain't sneakin' along shore, waitin' until we are fools enough to come in, so that they kin take our sculps, every man. I know they are. Don't tell me. It's in the natur' of the beast. An Injin likes sculps ez he likes his breakfast, cuss 'im."

It must not be supposed that the scout was idle while he talked. On the contrary, he was bending to his oar with his whole weight, and setting a good example to the men. He was not a man to shirk his duty, even though the labor did not accord with his views. The boat shot over the surface of the lake, almost at racing-speed. The point was now in full view, and they changed the course of the boat so that it brought them nearer to the land without in the least diminishing their speed. On they came, until the shadows of the trees upon the point, huge and dark, fell upon the boat. There was no sound upon the shore. A silence like death reigned there. Indeed, the stillness was unnatural. But, as they neared the point, and all but the two men in the bow had ceased rowing, to their joy Bill Eagan rose for a moment from the bushes, waved his hat, and sunk again from sight.

"Come along," said the major, in a subdued tone. "There is not a moment to lose."

By this time the boat had grounded, and while the men stood ready with their rifles, the major stood up in the stern and looked toward the place where Bill lay hidden. As he did so, the full force of the stratagem which had been used to get him into this trap burst upon him. Their comrade was a prisoner, tightly held by two Indians, who made use of him to draw the boat near the shore. In the single glance he cast about him, Seely was conscious that the bushes were lined with savage warriors, with weapons poised, waiting for the signal to pour in their fire. A man less cool than Major Seely, or less accustomed to Indian subtlety, would have shown by his face what he had seen. But, his countenance never changed.

"Steady," he whispered to the men. "Lay down your rifles and get your oars ready. Bill?"

"All right," said a muffled voice, which the major knew was not Bill's.

"Is the coast clear? Don't make any noise, Ned. Confound you, the bushes are full of Indians. We are in a trap!"

The last part of the sentence was addressed to the men in a whisper. They knew the danger, and were nerved to meet it. Each man had braced his feet against his stretcher and grasped the oars with the might of a Sampson.

"Why don't you come along?" said the major, in assumed impatience. "You are keeping us waiting. The Indians will be on our backs in a moment."

"You come here," said the muffled voice. "I want to tell you something."

"Keep close, then," said Seely. "I will be with you once. Have you seen any Indians? The woods are full of them below. Keep her head a little up-stream, boys, and when you do pull, give it to her, if you break your backs. Wait for the word. Steady. Now!"

At the word the oars struck the water all together, and every man bent his head. While the major was talking, Jake had managed to get the head of the boat round and to separate her a foot or two from the bank. The movement was apparently in order to allow the major to land. Before the

Indians had sufficiently recovered from their surprise to fire, nearly one hundred feet lay between the escaping boat and the shore. And so much were they taken by surprise, even then, that the fire was scattered and ineffectual. One of the men was slightly wounded in the shoulder; another in the wrist, but neither of them sufficiently to cause them to drop their oars. Before the Indians, who are notoriously slow with fire-arms, could load again, they were far enough away to laugh at the muskets. But just then a single rifle-shot came hissing through the air, and Ned Weston, who had pulled like a hero throughout, fell forward over his oar, the blood gushing from a ghastly wound in the breast.

Every one uttered a cry of surprise and horror. They had not expected a shot from a rifle. Where could the savages have obtained it?

There was no time to think of that now. They laid the wounded man in the bottom of the boat, and pulled straight for one of the little islands, with which this beautiful lake abounds, and which lifted its green head not more than two hundred yards away. As the boat struck the shore the men leaped out and pulled her up high and dry, while Seely, assisted by Jake, lifted the wounded man from the boat and laid him on the greensward, with a mossy knoll for a pillow. In moving him, a fresh torrent of blood gushed from his wounded breast. His lips were pinched and colorless, as men look when dying, and his comrades knew that the end was near at hand.

They were rough forest men, who had lived a life of hardship and privation, had faced death in a hundred shapes, and had seen many die. Ned was one of their kind—"rough and ready." Blunt in speech, ready to resent an injury or repay a kindness, asking no questions when sent on a hazardous mission, and doing his duty as a border man ought—he was a type of the race. And now, shot to death, he lay gasping his life away by the silent lake, upon which he had spent many a happy hour.

His comrades bent over him, and he could see by their faces that they had no hope. His eyes did not flinch, though they were growing dim, and his hand trembled, as he lifted it and laid it on his breast.

"Hit hard, major," he said. "Thar's no chance for me, is there?"

Major Seely turned away his head as he answered, "I fear not, Ned."

"So I thought. I'm bleedin' inwardly. Never mind. A man has only onct to die, an' this is my turn."

"I'll remember it," said Jake, savagely. "Let the St. Regis look out for me. I'll make them wish they never had been born for this."

"Are you there?" said the dying man, faintly. "I might have knowed it. Was any of the other boys hurt?"

"Not to speak of," said Jake. "Dan got a scratch in the shoulder, and Jim a slug in the arm from the first fire. It was the rifle that fixed you. Whar did they git a rifle, I should like to know?"

"Ain't it gittin' dark?" said Ned, stretching out his hand. "I'm thinkin' it must be. Jake, old friend, I've got a word to say to you. Do you mind my darter?"

"Of course I do. The prittiest little woman on the Mohawk," said Jake.

"She'll be all alone now, old boy. Who'll take keer on her, now I am gone?"

"I will do it," said the major.

"Thank you," said Ned. "But, I don't think it would do. She's too young an' pritty to be in a garrison, whar you must be most of the time."

"I've got a cabin nigh Dorrup,"\* said Jake. "My old wife is thar, and we ain't got chick nor child of our own. If so be sich a home ez I kin offer her would be any use, I offer it to her free an' full. What do you say?"

"I thank you," answered Ned, faintly. "She's a good gal too. She loved her poor rough father. Thar. It's settled. My little Nattie will have a home for life. It's gittin' darker all the time."

They looked at each other significantly. All felt that the end was near.

"Lift me up," he said. "I want to see the sun before I die."

They raised him up, and his fast closing eye swept over

\*Believeably.

the glassy surface of the lake, taking in at one comprehensive glance the distant hills, the trees upon the shore, and the sunlight falling on the placid sheet of water, gemmed here and there by islands, lying upon its surface green under the summer sky. He had lived amid such scenes all his life, and loved them as a forest-bred man only can.

"Lay me down," he said. "Say good-by to Nattie. Tell her her rough old father thought of her while dying. Good-by, toys. We've tramped the woods for many years together. I'm off on a new trail. I can't see the end. Good-by—good—"

The sentence was never finished, for with the last word his breath departed forever. There were sincere mourners there. They dug a grave for him as well as they could, with knives and hatchets. This done they wrapped him in his hunting-shirt and blanket and laid him down to rest under the shadow of the trees.

Jake had taken no part in the labor of burying. This man had been a tried friend, and the rough but true-hearted man could not bear to see him buried out of his sight. Seely came to him as he stood upon the shore, looking out toward the mainland.

"What are you thinking of, Jake?" inquired the officer.

"I was thinkin' in my mind how many painted Injins it would take to pay for such a life as that."

"Why?"

"Because they owe me that much. It will take a long time to pay the debt."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### A POLITE FOE.

"You have a solemn duty to perform, Jake," said Major Seely. "This dead man has given his daughter in charge to you. Keep the trust well."

"Major," said Jake, laying his hand upon his heart with a gesture which was full of grace, even in this rough man.

"I feel something here which tells me I can not be false to a dead friend. I said to poor Ned, 'Your darter shall have a home and a welcome whenever she chooses to come.' I meant it, too."

"I know that, my brave fellow," said Seely, taking his hand. "Believe me when I say that, as far as I can help you, my purse is always open to you in her aid. Let us do our best by her. Do you know her well?"

"As well as a rough border man kin know a gal like Nattie Weston. She's a beauty, major. Thar ain't sech a gal in any of the garrisons from York to Dorrup. I've seen 'em all, and I say it. Perhaps you might find one more to your taste, but to my mind, this little gal, with her shining black eyes, and her skin like satin, and a little touch of rose-color in her cheeks, beats 'em all. How she keeps her face so smooth and handsome, in the sun, wind and rain, I kain't tell. But, she does it."

"I should like to see her," said the major.

"She ain't ign'ant eyther," Jake went on to say. "She staid two year in Albany, and Ned worked the harder to keep her in school. She can read any print what ever was, and any writin' you ever see. She kin make pictures in worsteds on cloth."

"An accomplished lady."

"No. She don't claim to be a *lady*; she's a hunter's darter, and expects sometime to marry a hunter, and live in the woods. These pretty things ain't all she kin do, eyther. She kin fire a rifle to a spot. I've seen her hit a turkey at three hundred yards, a thing not many of the boys kin do. She kin ride a wild colt, without any saddle, and it takes a swift runner to catch her in a race."

The major laughed at this enumeration of qualities.

"Then she is fitted to take care of herself," he said.

"She won't have to do it long," said Jake. "'Thar ain't a youngster about Dorrup who ain't half mad for her sake. She's had offers by the dozen, but she won't listen to none. She likes to be free. I never *did* see *sech* a gal. Now, most of 'em, you know, are ready to marry the first chance they git. She ain't. Ef she looked down on all the boys she couldn't be more indiff'rent. But, it ain't that. She never refused a

man yit in a way that hurt him very bad. He'd go away feelin' sorry, and yit respectin' her in his heart. Leastways that's the way they talk to me ez has tried it."

"So the moths burn their wings in the flames," said the major. "I should like to see this forest paragon—I should indeed. But come. We waste time. Let us get to work again. One thing puzzles me. Poor Ned was killed by a rifle bullet. It is not often you see an Indian who can shoot well with a rifle. Somehow I have the impression a white man fired that shot."

Jake was gloomily silent for a moment. "'Tain't no good to talk about that now, major. I think ez you do. Time will show whether we are right."

"Now to get away from this place," said the major. "Our friends are very thick upon the western shore of the lake. What is your opinion in regard to the other."

"Let's go to the other side of the island," replied the scout; "perhaps I kin see signs."

They crossed the narrow island with hasty steps. As they passed out of the shadow of the trees Jake uttered an exclamation and pointed to the other shore. There the major could see three black spots which seemed to grow larger as he gazed. They were canoes coming with all speed from the shore.

"We must get out of this," said Seely, drawing a long breath. "Ten chances to one that yonder canoes contain foes. I wish I could be certain, but dare not take a chance. To the boat, men."

The foresters were ready to obey. They stepped into the boat in their proper places, and were followed by Jake and Seely, who again took up the steering-oar.

"It must be a stern chase," said the last-named person, looking over the water, "and it rests with us to make it a long one. If it comes to that, we will think this boat an English man-of-war, and we her sailors; and what English man-of-war is not good for three Frenchmen?"

The men cheered lustily.

"Pull away, my lads. If we can get to the foot of the lake in time we will find Warner. And then, we do not fear what the enemy can do. A company of our boys are equal to a *tribe* of St. Regis Indians. Row on!"

The men bent to their work, and for some moments nothing was heard but the click of the oars in the rowlocks, and the deep breathing of the rowers.

But, the canoes had changed their course the moment the boat shot out from the cover of the island, and were now moving in a course which bade fair to intersect that of the batteau before they reached the end of the lake. The canoes were heavily manned, and skimmed over the surface of the lake like arrows shot from strong bows. The batteau in which the white men sat was not formed so much for speed as for comfort and capacity. Glancing over his shoulder as they rowed, Seely could see that the boats must meet in a place about a mile from the headland upon which they expected to find friends.

"Can you keep her head straight for the point without my help, boys?" he asked.

Jake nodded. Seely laid down the steering-oar, and took up one of the rifles which was not loaded and charged it with great care. This done, he loaded the others and laid them where the men could reach them easily.

"Cease pulling," he said.

The men lay panting on their oars and looked at their leader; but his eyes were on the approaching canoes in an anxious, preoccupied manner. The canoes each held eight men, all Indians, except the second boat, which was steered by a man who wore a gaudy uniform covered with tinsel and lace. Even at that distance the major could see that he was a Frenchman. He was inciting the paddlers to greater exertions, as they could see by his frantic gesticulations.

"Take your rifles," said Seely, in a stern voice. "Bow-oar, pull her round; lay the broadside toward the enemy. We'll fight them muzzle to muzzle, this trip."

The bow-oar pulled the head of the boat round so that the rifles bore upon the advancing canoes.

"Never mind the men," said the major; "do as I tell you. Every man of you aim at the bow of the first canoe, and strike her close to the water's edge. We will teach them a lesson they will not forget soon. Not yet; don't fire till the word comes. We have escaped from as great a danger as this by keeping steady. Make ready, take aim, fire!"

Seven rifles spoke at once. The canoes might have been fifty yards away, and at that distance any man in the batteau could have hit a blaze the size of a maple-leaf. The bullets sprung out of the deadly-grooved bore and struck the leading canoe in the bow. Even at that distance they could hear the sound of the rending bark, and saw that the occupants of the canoe were in confusion, and had ceased paddling. The canoe at which they had aimed was seen to settle slowly down by the head. The occupants made frantic efforts to stop the leak, but in vain ; and by the time the rifles were again loaded, the canoe had sunk from sight, and eight Indians were struggling in the water.

"Oars!" cried Seely ; "pull for your lives."

The men dashed their oars through the water with the strength of giants. One of the canoes was engaged in picking up the men from the water ; but the second, steered by the Frenchman, came fearlessly on its course. They desired to impede the onward progress of the boat until the others could come up, when they hoped to succeed by sheer force of numbers. Seely was not slow to comprehend the maneuver, and made his plans accordingly. He saw that the Frenchman desired to capture them without bloodshed.

"Haltè la!" shouted the Frenchman ; "yield yourselves."

"Never," said Seely. "Keep her head a little to the right, boys. When I give the word, pull as you never pulled before."

"You would do well to yield," again shouted the Frenchman ; "I would save your lives."

"Thank you," said Seely ; "we are in no danger whatever." Then to the men : "Watch my eye, and when you see me lift my hand, lay down to it."

Scarcely ten feet now separated the two boats, and they were running at such an angle that they must soon lay side by side. Seely had picked up the steering-oar and laid it in the water. The other canoe, now loaded down to the water's edge, was slowly following in their wake ; there was little to fear from them. When no more than three feet separated the two crafts, Seely, by a stroke of the steering-oar, suddenly altered the course of the batteau, and gave the signal to his men. Three quick strokes sufficed, and the tight-built boat

ground through the frail side of the canoe, breaking her in two. Several of the occupants clung desperately to the boat, but were beaten off by the white men. The Frenchman, floating away on a part of the canoe, waved his hand in a graceful adieu.

"Farewell, messieurs; I have only to hope that we may meet again. I am Captain Jean Chartier, of the Nineteenth battalion. May I ask the favor of your name, monsieur the commandant?"

"Major Charles Seely, of the Independent Rangers."

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, I am sure," said Chartier. "When we meet again it will be under circumstances more favorable to me. Perhaps you wish to return and sink the other canoe; do so, by all means; we shall have only a mile to swim."

"Thanks," said Seely; "I think I shall not have the time. Good-day."

The men bent to their oars, and pulled toward the shore, not certain whether there was any safety for them even there. They could see an open field, and in the center a block-house, built the year before by the French, and afterward deserted by them as useless. The boat grounded on the beach."

"Pick her up," said the major.

The men ranged themselves on either side, and, lifting the batteau from the water, carried her into the block-house. No signs of the enemy were at hand; if they had followed at all it had been slowly. It was evident that they had depended too much upon the canoes. There was a whisky-cask or two in the block-house; Seely sent two of the men to the lake with one of these, and they filled it, plugged up the hole, and rolled it back to the stockade. Each man having three days' rations in his haversack, the party was provisioned for a short siege at least.

These things seen to, Seely cast a hasty glance over the state of the block-house itself. It had been well built in the first place. The builders had taken the precaution, after fitting the logs to their places, to saw off the ends, so that it was impossible to use the corners as ladders, as was too often done in block-houses. The door was of solid oak pieces, dovetailed into each other in a remarkably strong manner. A French

was set up against the wall upon each side; on this the defenders could stand when firing, bringing them on a level with the loop-holes. These loops were provided with flaps, that could be raised or lowered at pleasure. The material of which the fort was composed being sycamore, no rifle-ball could by any possibility penetrate it.

"A very good block," remarked Seely.

"Do you know," rejoined Jake, "I never thought much of a Frenchman, anyhow; but they *can* build forts or block-houses better than we can. Thar's Ticonderoga now; Abercrombie won't take it—see if he does."

"I hope he will," said the major, gravely; "it is of vast importance to us, and he has a noble army."

"That's true; I don't deny it; but he don't go to work right. Thar's Lord Howe, he is a noble feller; don't let any one say he ain't, or he must fight Jake Dowdle. Why, he spoke to me the other day; I don't care much for lords, but he ain't like the rest. He spoke to me, jest as he would to the Ginal."

"What did he say?"

"You know I'd been scouting, and Putnam was talkin' to me about it. I see a young man standin' by—Lord bless you, I didn't know who he was, and when I'd made my report, he says, 'I would be pleased to go out on a scout with this gentleman.' 'This gentleman,' he said. *Me*, old Jake Dowdle, a gentleman. I looked at him hard for a minnit, thinkin' he was quizzin' me, but he wasn't; I could see that."

"What did Putnam say?"

"Oh, he laughed and said that his lordship could not go with a better man than his best scout, Jake Dowdle. Then I knew who he was."

"Lord Howe is a gallant man and a good soldier—a far better one, I am afraid, than some who hold a higher rank in the service. We shall see, when the time comes. What is that, Jim?"

"I think we'd better git the door closed, major. They've begun to land, and, if I ain't mistaken, them chaps on shore are skulkin' up the beach yonder."

"Close the door and bar it. Come up on the roof with me, Jake."

The two climbed the ladder, and reached the room above; from this they passed, by a second short ladder, to the roof of the block-house. It was built up with a parapet about three feet high. Looking over this, they could see that the Indians who were swimming were struggling to the shore. Most of them had put their weapons into the single remaining canoe, and several savages had left it, in order to lighten it for the arms. In addition to those landing, Seely could detect a number of Indians in the shadow of the trees. These were their first assailants, after the slaughter of the panther. They were flitting on from tree to tree, like silent ghosts, hideous in their war-paint, their weapons gleaming in the sunshine.

"Thar they go, the painted riptiles," said the scout, vindictively. "Now, darn and blast their picters, I say; they won't rest till they have us out of this, and git our sculps. What I say is this. If they git us out of this without our knowledge and consent, we are bigger fools than I think for."

"Right, Jake; they must fight for us before they get us, must they not?"

"Bet they must," was the answer. "Now, look here; a Frenchman ain't a man, is he? Blamed ef I know; but it seems to me a man wouldn't like to consort with red heathens all the time. I couldn't; I like to keel over the red niggers better than to sleep with them."

"How many do you think they number?" asked Seely.

"I kain't say; a hundred, like as not. Thar's twenty-four in one lump. Anyhow, we spilled sixteen of them; wet their jackets a little, I guess; but they don't mind that, they are like water-rats; you *can't* drown 'em. Christians wou'd have folded their arms and sunk at once but that set of devils wouldn't; no, of course not. It's just like 'em; they ain't got feelin' enough to die when thar time comes."

"Very obstinate in them," said the other, laughing; "but here comes our aquatic friend the captain. I wonder what he wants; a summons to surrender, no doubt."

It was indeed Captain Jean Chartier, who came forward with a stereotyped smile on his face, waving a pocket-handkerchief on the end of a ramrod.

"Ah, good-day, messieurs. I am charmed to meet you again. Upon the occasion of our last meeting I was somewhat pressed for time, and I could not extend to you those courtesies which it is now in my power to bestow. I hope your health was not injured by our late misunderstanding."

The best of this cool speech was that it was made in perfect good faith, and evinced a genuine concern for their health.

"Thank you, captain," said the young leader. "I am obliged to you. We have not suffered in the least, though the Indians have killed two of our men. At least, one is dead and the other missing. I am afraid he is gone."

"Sad indeed," said the captain. "But, then, it is the fortune of war. Some are doomed to fall in these troublesome times. But, what has this to do with my errand? I suppose you have guessed it before now."

"Although a Yankee, I am not good at guessing," replied the major. "Allow me to ask your errand?"

"It is to demand your surrender, and that of the men under your command, together with the rifles and ammunition in your hands."

"I beg your pardon, captain. You see how we are situated. We have provisions and water, plenty of ammunition, a good block house for defense, and I do not see how you can reasonably ask me to surrender."

"But, my dear sir, do you not see at once that I have the power to drive you out? None of my men are hurt, though they got their breeching wet. I have a hundred men; you have but seven. Then how do you expect to defend yourselves?"

"We can try," said the major. "It is not in accordance with our old English notions of honor to give up without a struggle. You yourself would not respect us if we did so."

"I protest that under the circumstances you can do no less. The matter rests here, you will understand. My men are peculiar. They are well enough, unless you shed blood, and when you do that, they are devils. I acknowledge it. But, what can I do. Peste! We must do something for France, and in this villainous country they are the best to fight here. We must use them or have them used against us."

The major could say nothing against this, for he knew too well that the English used the Indians in their battles, when they could get them.

"I can not yield. The honor of England and this colony is, for the time being, in my hands. I can not suffer it to be tarnished through my means. As you say, you have the most men. But, weak as we are, we will do all we can for our country and flag."

"I am proud to meet you. I am proud to fight such men. Be assured if you fall into my hands you shall have as good treatment as I can give you. But, I fear that if you shed the blood of my men, they will not suffer you to escape with life."

"Like other men, we take our chances. I have already shed the blood of the savages, on one of the headlands of the lake when they attacked us. Then, according to your statement, there is nothing for us to do but to fight to the last."

"I am really concerned. Have you then killed a man? I am sorry to hear it. When Wenona comes, he will rage like a mad bull for your blood."

"Wenona?"

"Ay. You have heard of him—the giant chief of the St. Regis. But, let me say to you that, rough as he is, he has a noble heart as ever beat in the breast of a courtier. There are times when he shows a spirit of chivalry which would do honor to the knights of old."

"I have heard of Wenona, indeed," said the major. "The forest is full of tales of his bravery, of his deeds of savage heroism, and of savage cruelty. I would like to meet this man."

"Then pray heaven you never may, in the battle-field. You know nothing of the giant strength of Wenona. I have seen him seize two strong men by the belt and raise them over his head. You and I are strong men. But his arm is strong enough to dash us both to the earth."

"I am curious to see this Indian Bayard," said the major. "I hope the time may come soon. When it does, he shall feel the strength of my blade."

"I bid you good-day. In ten minutes the attack will commence."

## CHAPTER IV.

## BLOCKADED.

"IT begins to get a little warm," said the ma'or. "That fellow, with his cool, ceremonious manner, annoys me more than I would care to say. His air of superiority, and of having us completely in his power, is very tantalizing to a man like me. He will have to work for us before he gets us."

"I've allus thought Frenchmen the queerest critters in the world," said Jake. "They are the only men that kin come up to a chap and shake hands with him, when at the same time they are b'ilin' to cut his throat. Durn my hide ef I kin understand thar way of doin' business."

"Let us prepare for the attack, Jake. There is no time to lose. Arrange the men two on a side. You and I will take the front, and try to make it warm for the villains. Have you seen the giant chief?"

"I seen him onct, major, an' ef I know my owl heart I don't want to see him no more. It was in a battle on the shore of the lake, down yonder. I was cuttin' away at the red niggers with knife and hatchet, standin' on the edg<sup>es</sup> of the bluff. I jest had a glimpse of a big fellow comin' at me through the smoke, and went at him. The next mil<sup>it</sup> I was grabbed by the shoulder and belt an' lifted from the ground. As I whirled into the air, the rascal shouted, "Wenona! great chief," and then I knew him. After he whirled me round his head onct or twice he give me a sling an' I flew out into the lake, like an arrow from a bow. As I came to the surface I seen it was all over with our poor fellows. Thar was ten of us when the fight began, an' I was the only one that ever seen the settlements alive."

"What did you do?"

"I struck out for the island and the Indians never knew that I was gone. I've thought since then that the big cuss wanted to give me a chance for my life. Anyway, he's the

only Indian that I should hate to draw a trigger on. I allus shall think he liked my style of fi'tin' and give me a chance."

"Then you are like the rest. You make out Wenona a chivalrous savage."

"Don't use none of them words when you talk to me, major. I ain't goin' to stand it. When I've done any thing mean enough to suffer in that way, it's all right. What did you mean by that last word?"

"I meant to ask if he was of a generous disposition to those who fall into his hands."

"Ya-as, he is. You bet on that! Thar ain't a great many chaps likely to help a man in a fight as he will. But, when he has you in his hands, being he's the chief, he has to do as the people say."

"Are not the savages moving in the edge of yonder woods?"

"Ay, ay, major. I see thar dirty backs crawlin' along through the bushes. Ah, the skunks! I'd like to give it to them, but it won't do. Let 'em crawl a while. You'd better let me order the boys to be savin' of thar ammunition. We ain't got none too much to spare."

"Go and speak to them. I will stay here and watch their movements."

Jake hurried below and passed from man to man, giving them their orders, according to their skill as riflemen. The men listened to him respectfully, for they knew him to be an adept in Indian fighting.

In the mean time, the major was watching the enemy, who were creeping slowly toward the work. Most of them were at a distance of three or four hundred yards, quite out of range of the rifles of that day. But, in a short time the more adventurous of the savages approached within a hundred and fifty yards, and as these were furnished with muskets, they opened an ineffectual fire on the block. Most of the bullets struck short of the work; they then advanced again until they reached a point within a hundred yards of the work. Up to this time the major had been coolly seated on the parapet of the block, but now he dropped behind it, as the bullets began to whistle about his ears. The Indians in front of the block were lying behind a natural breastwork, formed by a

low ridge. On the other sides, the woods approached the work, being only a hundred yards distant. The trees protected the red rascals from harm, but to attack the place in good earnest they must cross an open plot of ground and during the passage must be exposed to the fire of the terrible rifles, of which they had a righteous fear. It was evident that they did not like the look of this open space, but a loud voice ordered them on, speaking in the Indian tongue.

"Git ready yer rifles, boys. That means business; and it seemis to me I recognize that v'ice. Blame my eyes ef I don't think it was Wenona."

As he spoke the open ground before the work, and on all sides of it, was seen to be alive with savages. The rifles of the defenders began to play upon them, doing fearful execution. Not a man in the block who was not a practiced marksman, as the Indians found to their cost. They left a bloody trail behind them as they came on. Within thirty yards of the work the fire became too terrible for them, and they fled to the woods. Only a portion of them kept on, and eight men obtained a lodgment under the walls of the wooden fort.

"Let 'em alone," said Jake, as some of the men tried to fire at these. "They kain't hurt nobody, and they'll have to ask us ef they want to git out. Give it to them chaps that's runnin'. They won't try that ag'in, by daylight, durn 'em."

The fugitives gained the woods, but on the trail they left behind were many gory warriors, who would never again tread the war-path, never glide like specters through the thickets, to take away the lives of unsuspecting men. But the braves who escaped were proud of the unforgotten deeds of those who lay, grim in death, under the walls of the block-house and on the grassy meadows.

Their savage breasts were swelling with a sense of the wrongs they had endured, and the desire to avenge the deaths of their slaughtered comrades.

"We shall have bloody work now," said the major. "Wenona will never rest until he has us in his power. Ha, do you see that? As I live. Yonder he comes."

The bushes parted on the north side of the work, and a savage of majestic stature came slowly forward, carrying in his hand a white cloth, as a sign of truce. As he approached

A murmur of admiration stole through the circle at the erect bearing and stately figure of the man. He was nearly seven feet in height, and was richly dressed for an Indian—his coat being embroidered with gold and silver lace, beautifully wrought with thread of the same material. A wampum belt was thrown over his shoulder, and then bound loosely about his waist. Upon this broad belt various symbolical devices, totems of the tribe, had been wrought by skillful hands. The face of the chief was one indicative of power. From his bold brow his long hair depended on his shoulders. His eyes, dark and piercing, were turned upon the work, and when he spoke his voice rung out like the call of a trumpet.

"Let the white chief appear," shouted the giant, stretching out his hand. "A chief of St. Regis calls him."

The major advanced to the parapet.

"What calls you here?" he demanded.

"I am Wenona, chief of St. Regis," said he. "Let my brother listen to the words of a chief. See! The ground is red out yonder, and on it lie the bodies of men who have been slain. These were men of our blood. Their skins were red, so were their hearts. I come to ask that we may take them away, and bury them out of sight."

"The chief may do as he will. Let him promise that his men shall come no nearer than yonder dead body, and we will promise not to fire upon them."

"The word of a chief is given. The warriors shall only come to remove their dead, and then the white chief will know that we are ready to fight again. Listen to the words of Wenona. In two days there will not be left a log upon another in this house. We will take it, and burn it with fire. Do not think a chief would say this in boasting. Wenona has made a vow, and he will perform it."

"We also have made a vow," said the major. "To-day one of our warriors was killed in the boat, by a bullet from a rifle on land. Two of us have promised to find the Indian who fired that shot, and kill him, no matter how."

"The white chief is like the rest of the Yengees. He thinks no one can do a wrong but an Indian. A shot comes from the shore and a white man dies, all Yengees cry, 'an Indian.' Do none but Indians walk the woods?"

"Could it have been a Frenchman? Was it the captain?"

"The captain slays men openly."

"Has the chief any thing more to say? If he has not let him go back as he came, and bury his dead."

"My brother is not so bad as the rest of the Yengees, or he would not let the Indians take away their dead. We will remember this when the time comes."

With these words he turned and stalked away, paying no attention to his men, who were crouching under the walls of the block, and who began to realize that they had got into trouble. The moment the chief returned, the warriors stole out, unarmed, and removed their dead from the earth in front of the block.

"They feel it," said Jake; "say what you will about the Injins, they are kind to one another, and they've all lost friends in this yer fight. What do you think of Wenona, major?"

"I never saw a man more nobly built, nor one who carried himself better. It seems a pity that such a man was born a savage."

"As fer the rest," said Jake, "I don't tally them a penny's worth; they ain't no better than a set of trampin', sneakin' thieves; but the chief ain't of that patter."

"No one can fail to admire such a noble physique, even in a savage," said the major. "If it is matched by his brains, I fear he will give us trouble before morning. Do you think they will attack us again to-day?"

"Not a bit of it; I'm a little surprised that they didn't let us alone until night. It ain't often that Injins go fer white men in daylight unless from an ambush. Then they are apt to give us jesce. Howsoever, we may ez well rest and get ready for the night; it will be warm then. I wonder when Seth Warner means to come along?"

"I expected him here to-day. How it would please me to hear his rifles. With him to aid us, woe to the band of Venona!"

"They mout lay in ambush fer him," said Jake, uneasily; "that is ef they knew he was comin'. I wish we were all 'a at Whitehall, an' on our way to Ticonderoga—not that I

expect much when we git thar. Abercrombie ain't the man to fight the Frenchers. I don't like the look of his face."

"Why, Jake?"

"'Cause he ain't got power in it sech as I like to see in a leader's face. You kain't fool me in a face; I know in a minnit whether a man is good blood or not. Now thar's old Put.; he'd take a b'ar out of a trap at dead of night, when it was so dark you couldn't see your hand; he ain't afraid of Injins, *he* ain't. They had him tied to the stake onct an' Moran got him clear. This Frenchman in command of this party is jest sech another man, you know. He won't stand by an' see a cruel deed done ef he kin help it; but, in battle, he is free to cut your throat any minnit; that's the kind of man I like—a tiger when the sinews are stiff, and humane when the battle lulls ag'in. Them kind of men are the kind fer us, you know."

"I rather like the captain," said the major, laughing. "But what does this mean? There is some commotion in the woods. Ha! it looks like another attack. Stand to your arms, men. Pandemonium has broken loose."

A series of terrible yells came from the woods, increasing in volume as they approached the block. The men poised their weapons and waited. They had not long to remain in suspense; scarcely a moment had passed when a man burst from the woods, closely pursued by a body of savages. A single glance showed the defenders of the block that it was their missing comrade, Bill, the half-breed; his clothing had been nearly stripped from his person, and his body was stained with blood. They fired at him as he ran, but he did not fall. He was making directly for the block, running with the speed of a hunted deer.

"Fire at them!" shouted the major. "Drive the scoundrels back!"

The men obeyed. The pursuers halted, while the object of pursuit came on.

"Stand by to open the gate," cried Seely; "we must save him at all hazards. Have your weapons ready. We must make short work of the rascals under the wall."

The gate was flung open, and at the same time seven rifles cracked. Four of the skulking savages fell dead at the fir-

fire; four remained, and these speedily died by the weapons of the rangers. Major Seely killed one, Jake struck down another with his rifle-butt; and, before the Indians in the woods could interfere, not one was left alive. Bill came on at a rapid pace, and sunk almost fainting to the earth, at the feet of his friends. They raised him quickly, and carried him into the block, where they washed the blood from his wounds. They were knife-cuts and hatchet-wounds, and were slight. None of them would disable him from active service, as they were confined to his shoulders and sides.

"How did you git away, Bill?" asked Jake. "Jerusha! that was a hard run. Don't crowd around him, you fellers. Watch the wood; we will have 'em on us ag'in before you know it."

"I broke out," said Bill, faintly, "and ran for my life. It was a close shave—neck or nothin'."

"I kain't see how you got off so easy, old man; why, you ain't hurt a bit. I knowed they was bad shots, but didn't think they was quite so bad ez that. Thar; kin you stand?"

"Help me up," said Bill.

Jake gave him his hand to raise him, and noticed that the small eyes of the escaped man were always fixed on the ground. There was something in his manner which puzzled the scout.

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## CHAPTER V.

### A NEW RECRUIT.

"THE durned critter is studying some mischief," thought Jake; "wonder what it is? Thar, you kin stand now, I reckon; try it anyhow. Them little flea-bites didn't orter take the pluck out of a man that way. It's queer; you didn't use to be so."

"You don't know what I've been through, Jake. I've been skeered, I allow, I never was so skeered in my born days, and I only got away by the skin of my teeth. Under

them sarcumstances, you kain't expect a man to be quite himself. I'll be all right in a minnit."

"Are you able to answer my questions?" asked the major.

"I'll try, major. Go on."

"How were you taken?"

"I kain't rightly say. I was sneakin' along on the trail, and the fust I knew I was down, and a tight hitch on my hands. They took me down to the p'int, whar you come in."

"Why did you not warn us of our danger?"

"I don't see how I could do that very well, with a knife-hilt half way down my throat, and a knife-p'int at my heart I couldn't holler; I'd 'a warned you ef I could."

"No doubt. Where were you taken then?"

"They took me with 'em into the woods."

"You saw Ned shot. Who did the deed? We must know."

"I was down on my back when the shot was fired. 'Twas done with my rifle, that I know; but I couldn't see who fired it to save my life. So they killed poor Ned?"

"Yes. He is dead, and buried on yonder island. I would give ten guineas to know the man who fired the shot, for the sake of the girl whom our comrade has left behind."

"You mean Nattie, I reckon? She's a scornful little jilt."

"Take keer what you say, Bill," said Jake, in a warning voice. "I won't hear a word ag'in' Nattie. Thar ain't a better nor a prittier gal in this section. I'm her gardeen, now her father's gone."

"Then she needn't be so scornful to them that sought to use her well," muttered Bill.

"I know all about that, Master Bill. What ef she wouldn't have you? A gal like her is free to choose, I judge; an' if so be she *didn't* like you, which *she* didn't, who hez got a better right to refuse?"

"I war hon'rable," said Bill. "I offered to make her my wife, the wife of an honest man, an' she refused me with scornful words."

"That ain't true," said Jake. "Nattie could never be unkind to any one, I don't keer who it is."

"And Ned scorned me too. He flyed high, did Ned. He thought her good enough for an officer. Didn't he know that no good ever came of sech people comin' together? The officers sp'iled her, they did. She wouldn't look at a plain hunter after she'd been to Albany."

"You shet up, Bill. She ain't for sech ez you. What right has a great hulkin' chap like you, with a cross of black blood in yer veins, to think of a gal like Nattie? You orter be licked, ef it's only for yer impudence."

"Black blood, Jake," said Bill, straightening up, suddenly, and laying his hand upon a knife. "Take keer what you say."

"Don't try to frighten *me*, Bill. I ain't one of them sort. I said black blood, an' what I say I'll stand by. Injin blood is black blood, an' you've got it in yer veins, hot ez fire."

"The man that sez I've got Injin blood lies like a dog."

With a single leap, Jake fastened on the throat of the speaker, and shook him as a terrier shakes a rat. The teeth of the fellow rattled like castinets, and he clutched in vain at his knife. The major seized one in each hand, and parted them by a single effort of his powerful arms.

"Beg parding," said Jake. "I didn't orter done it, seein' that he's hurt. But no man don't want to call me a liar."

"Then don't call me an Injin," screamed the other, angrily. "Blast you, I'll hev yer blood for that word."

"Any time you want blood ont of me you know how to git it," said Jake. "You've got a rifle, an' so have I. Any of the boys will see fair."

"Silence, both of you," said the major. "Is this a time to quarrel? Jake, I am ashamed of you! As for you, sir, let me hear no more of such threats as you used just now."

"He insulted me," muttered Bill.

"He said no more than he believed, and you gave him the lie. You are the most to blame, I consider. To your duty, Jake. I will attend to this man myself. Now, sir, how many Indians are there in the woods?"

"I should say nigh on two hundred, major," replied the man, never lifting his small eyes from the ground.

"Two hundred? I hardly thought that. I don't think the Frenchman put their numbers as high."

"I wouldn't be sartin, major," replied Bill, sullenly  
 "That's ez nigh ez I could git at it. Mebbe thar ain't quite  
 so many."

"Course there ain't," said Jake, who still lingered near.  
 "He kain't see after dark, an' his 'rithmetic was neglected."

"Be quiet, Jake. Are there any other Frenchmen among  
 'em besides the captain?"

"I didn't see none," replied Bill.

"Did they torture you?"

"They untied me to do it; but, I seed it was my last  
 chance, an' I broke away. That's the gospel truth, major."

"That will do. You will be stationed at yonder loop-hole,  
 and from that will fire upon the enemy as they advance. Be  
 careful not to waste your powder. You are a good shot!  
 Do your best."

"Why, you don't mean to fight them, major?" demanded the  
 man, in a surprised tone.

"Certainly; why not?"

"You ain't got the men."

"We have as many as there is room for. We can just  
 work comfortably. Do not fear but we shall defend our-  
 selves."

"But, major, you will only make it worse for us all ef  
 you fight. Now, ef you give up on the spot, we kin git good  
 terms. Ef you don't, we will all be killed."

"We must take our chances," said the major. "You must  
 take yours with the rest. We are all in the same boat.  
 What could we gain by giving ourselves up now? The  
 result will be the same in any case. We shall be given up  
 to the torture, if taken now, or hereafter."

"No we won't, major. The Frenchman will let us off  
 easy. I'm most sure of it. They say if you will surrender  
 now, you shall be treated as prisoners of war. But if you  
 fight it out you will all be burned at the stake."

"I will surrender to no man as long as I have as good  
 chances of successful defense as this place offers. Go to your  
 duty. I will attend to mine."

The major went up to the parapet to watch the movements  
 of the red-skins, while it was yet light. Not one of them  
 was in sight, but he knew that the forest was alive with them,

ready to start up at a moment's notice. As he sat upon the parapet he saw something which could not be readily seen from the shore—a small canoe, paddled by a single occupant. It was stealing along close to the bluff, moving rapidly forward. All at once it shot under the bank and disappeared. As he was watching the spot he saw a head raised cautiously above the bank, speedily followed by the body of the new-comer. At the spot where he had landed, a growth of ferns ran along the border of a small stream, which flowed into the lake, passing near the south-east corner of the block. The figure plunged into these ferns and disappeared again, evidently making toward the block. The major kept his eye upon the stream, and soon saw the visitor dart across an open space among the ferns, and again drop out of sight. Soon after, a hand was lifted above the ferns, and the major understood the signal to mean that the person, whoever it was, wanted to enter. He ran down to the gate, removed the bars, and threw it open. He had hardly done so, when a slight figure rose from the earth and darted in over the bodies of the dead savages in the gateway. The Indians evidently now saw the movement for the first time, for they broke into savage yells, and reopened fire. But, the gate was closed, and the stranger stood before the major, breathing hard from his recent run. He was a boy of perhaps sixteen years of age, dressed in a neat hunting-garb. His hair was quite long, even for that period, and was crowned by a jaunty hunting-cap. His feet were incased in moccasins, dainty enough for a lady. His smooth cheeks were sunbrowned by the summer sun, and the hand which grasped a small rifle showed the same healthy tint. The face was handsome, cut in an exquisite mold, and his teeth were white and even.

"Who are you?" demanded the major.

"I, major? I thought you knew me. I am Willie Leslie."

"I never saw you before. How came you here?"

"I was up the lake a piece and heard the firing. I thought I would paddle down and see the fun. You are in danger, it seems?"

"Yes. How comes it that so young a person as you are out here? You would be safer in the garrisoned towns."

"I might be safer, as you say, major, but what is safety to

freedom? I could not bear to be shut up in a town all the time; I should be thinking of the free woods, and longing to fly away to them. No, sir; the life of the woods for me. A week or so in the town, now and then, and then heigh for the greenwood! I envy Robin Hood and his band their home in merry Sherwood."

" You will make a rare recruit," said the major, smiling. " But, seriously, my brave lad, I am sorry to see you here. Our danger is greater than you imagine. Upon the lake you were safe; but when you came to this spot you joined yourself with those who may perhaps be doomed to die."

" You can fight," added the boy.

" We intend to; but a ferocious band compasses us about, from whom we may not be able to escape. If it were possible, I would advise you to go back to your canoe, and escape."

" I hope you think better of me than that," said the boy. " I can not go away like a coward; let me stay and do what I can in your aid."

" You shall stay if you will. Any aid will add to our chances, and one with so brave a spirit as yours must be of aid to us. Can you use that rifle?"

" A little, major; just give me a place by your side, and I will do what I can to aid you."

" You shall have that place, my brave boy," said Major Seely. " But, you must promise me one thing first. You will not expose yourself to danger."

" Not more than the rest, Major Seely," replied the boy, cheerfully. " But in these days I must be in more or less danger, when I stand where bullets fly about like hailstones. We must all take our chances. My life is no better than that of any of these brave men with you."

Jake had been edging nearer to them during the interview, and now for the first time obtained a full view of the face of the speaker. The major saw him start, and utter a low exclamation, apparently of surprise.

" Pardon me," said the boy. " I wish to speak with that man a moment. I know him."

" Certainly," said the major. " Your time is your own, as far as that is concerned. Come back to me when you have spoken to him."

"I will do so," said the boy, as he walked away, and drew Jake aside. They conversed in low tones for five minutes, when they saw the lad throw up his hands and sink to the ground. Jake caught him in his arms.

"What is the matter?" asked Seely, advancing quickly. "I do not understand this."

Jake looked up with a puzzled face.

"Don't mind him," he said. "I told him something that overcame him. He's lost a good friend, one he set store by."

"Do you know the boy, Jake?"

"I judge I do."

"Can he be trusted?"

"Trusted! If I held my life in my hand I'd put it into his'n, and know he'd keep it safe, or lose his own. Don't you be afraid to trust the lad, major. He's a tender-hearted little chap, but he's brave as a lion when danger comes."

"I thought he might be trusted," said the major, with a look of satisfaction. "If you had said not, it would have shaken my faith in human nature. Who is he?"

"A boy I knew at Dorrup. A smart boy, you bet high! He kin fire a rifle ez well ez the best of them. You'd orter see him."

"His name, his name!" demanded the major, with a little touch of impatience in his tone. "I did not understand that."

"Oh. His name. A name's nothin'. Thar. He's comin' to. Feel better now?"

"Yes," said the lad, beginning to realize his situation, and speaking in a faint voice. "Did I give way like that? I never thought to come to you, and find him gone, Jake."

"The major asked your name," said Jake. "I didn't know whether you'd keer to give it him."

"I did so," said the boy, rising to his feet. "My name is Willie Leslie. The major does not remember names well. I only saw him once, and I never forgot him."

"I remember as in a sort of dream that I have seen you ~~nowhere~~," rejoined the officer. "I am ashamed to say that I can not now tell where. Your face recalls an incident which I have never forgotten, and always shall remember; but, let it pass. How you could be connected with that event passes my comprehension. I am sorry that any news given you

by Jake overcame you so. I am afraid our rough border-life will be too much for you."

"Do not believe it. I may give way for a moment in a time like this, but you will find that it will not occur again. I remember you well, and knew you the moment I saw you."

"Where did you meet me?" asked Seely, still looking puzzled.

"I saw you at Schenectady," replied the boy. "Do not ask me any more questions now; and if you will be so kind, let me speak with Jake again. I shall not give way to my feelings any more. I wish to ask him more questions."

The major retired to his post of observation on the roof. Willie and Jake sat down in one corner, and talked in low, earnest tones for over half an hour, when they rose and came forward together. It was something strange for Jake to care for any one so effeminate in appearance as this lad, but, for the rest of the day he watched him closely, taking care that he never exposed himself. One man in particular noticed this. That man was Bill Eagan. He followed them with his eyes, and a sinister light began to come into those twinkling black orbs. Willie, looking up, caught their restless glance, and gave a start of surprise.

"Jake," he whispered. "Do you see that man? I do not like him."

"Who?"

"Bill Eagan."

"I forgot. You *do* know the darned heathen. Don't speak to him. Don't even look at him. People don't half know the devil that lies hid in his Injin blood. Ef I had *my* way, he wouldn't be in the rangers."

"I fear the man. You know where he met me. I don't think he remembers me now, but there is a lurking, half-formed suspicion in his face which shows me that it would take but little to put him on the right track."

"He's a born scout, is Bill Eagan," said Jake. "I give him that credit. But, it's a shame that sech a black-hearted beast should know so much of forest craft. It seems to me that a man, to be a true forester, orter be a true man. Mebbe I'm wrong, but that's the way I look at it."

"You are right. *He* was such a man."

"Don't speak of that now," said Jake, his voice breaking a little. "Ned was all a scout should be, rough and ready, true of heart, firm of hand, a true friend, a noble enemy. Thar. He war all Bill Eagan is not; an' you come here an' make me tell you he is gone."

"I half expected it," said the boy, in a sad tone. "I am a dreamer, as you know; and, as I walked the woods, something seemed to whisper to me, 'you are alone—alone!' In such times as these, I take to the lake by a sort of instinct. I am happier there—far happier than in any other place—and I lie in my canoe, rocking on the water, and look up at the gulls overhead, and at the drifting clouds, and thank God for a beautiful world. It is man's wickedness which mars its fair face. Now listen to me. I want you to watch that Eagan. Never let him out of your sight. I heard something to-night which made me think you had a man among you who could not be trusted, and, unless my power of reading faces has gone from me, he is not a man who would keep faith with any one."

"What have you heard?"

"This afternoon, as I was resting under the shadow of a bank, not a mile away, two men were talking above me. One of them was a Frenchman, who called himself Jean Chartier. The other was an Indian, and from the glimpse I had of him, a man of giant stature. I heard them speak of some one who was a prisoner in their hands, who belonged to the major's party. Have you such a man?"

"Yes. Bill Eagan was taken, but escaped."

"Then watch him! The man said, 'Do you hope for any thing from this prisoner?'

"The Indian answered: 'Yes; he has red blood in his veins. He will be true to us.'"

"Ha! That is jest what might have been expected of Bill Eagan! I'm goin' at him. Don't hold me, Willie. I won't be held."

"Keep quiet. We must catch him in his own trap, if, indeed, he *is* false. If you accuse him now, you have no proof but the words I heard spoken indistinctly. Let us wait and watch. If he is indeed false, as I strongly suspect, we will

know it in time. Now I must find the major, and put him on his guard."

"Be keerful, Willie. The major's sharp."

"I know it," said the boy. "Trust me to take care of myself. Be on *your* guard."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A NIGHT'S WORK.

**NIGHT** came on; and, as if to assist the plans of the enemy, great clouds began to roll up in the sky, shrouding every thing in a darkness like that of Egypt.

Major Seely knew that the hour of their trial was near at hand. A strange silence which reigned on every side was to him the precursor of an attack.

All the practiced foresters in the block knew this well. Teeth were set hard, every face showed a grim determination to do all in their power for life.

Not a rifle-shot, not even the sound of a human voice disturbed the silence of the woods around. The major never left his post of observation on the top of the house, and though he could only see objects at a few yards away in the thick darkness, yet he knew that no savage had yet approached the work. The attack, when it came, would be sudden as a clap of thunder from a clear sky. Willie remained by the officer's side. The boy seemed to have taken a strange fancy to the major, and liked to remain near him.

"Had you not better go to the lower part of the house, my boy? You will be safer there," said Major Seely, kindly.

"Thank you, major; but, if you please, I'd rather stay here by you. Do you think they will attack us soon?"

"I am expecting them every moment. My poor lad, I am sorry that you came here to-day; of all times this is the most dangerous."

"If you will believe me, major, in spite of the weakness I

showed to-day, I glory in danger. My friends have tried to dissuade me from these perilous expeditions, but I love the woods, even though the panther and the Indian are on the trail. Will you tell me what it was of which my face reminded you? It will serve to while away the time until they come."

"I will tell you. It was a year ago, as I think, and I was on an expedition up the Mohawk, to the east of Schenectady. When on the trail, I passed a little house buried amid leaf and vine—a perfect little paradise. A woman's hand had trained those vines; no man ever could have shown so much taste. A hound lay asleep at the door. I walked on, and entered a wood beyond; there a spring rushed from the foot of a hill, and trickled down into the river. By the side of the rill, taving her bare feet in the water of the stream, sat a beautiful girl, with a face of which yours strangely reminds me."

"Mine, major; that is a capital joke, that my face should make you think of a beautiful girl! Perhaps, if you met her again, the romance gone, you would change your mind."

"Never! As I stood looking at her, a man came down the path from the opposite direction, and reined in his horse at her side. He was an officer of the regular army—a brainless, purse-proud aristocrat, who thought a girl of her degree could be insulted with impunity. He accosted her in an off-hand, familiar way, which was in itself an insult, and I saw her dark eyes flash, as she replied to him as he deserved.

"'Don't be angry, my pretty maid, because your handsome face has gained you an adorer,' said he. 'Do you know I am an officer of the British army? I am Captain Landes, of his majesty's Forty-second Regiment.'

"'Pass on, then,' said the girl, promptly; 'and do not insult one who is not of your degree.'

"'I meant no insult,' said the captain, dismounting, and throwing his bridle over a swinging bough; 'but your lips look so tempting that I must have a kiss.'

"The next moment she was struggling in his arms. I stepped out, and quietly knocked him down. It happened that

the fellow knew me. He sprung to his feet, and being no coward, drew his sword."

" You beat that fellow, I hope" said the boy, his eyes flashing fire.

" I only disarmed him then; but we met afterward at Albany and fought it out. I ran him through the body, and though he was not killed, he was so badly hurt that he had to sell his commission and go home."

" It served him right. And did you get the name of the girl?" said Willie.

" No, Willie; she thanked ~~me~~ for the service. I had done her, but told me that no good could come for a girl of her degree to know a man so far above her in the social scale. I tried in vain to combat her resolution, but I found her firm. She went away, and from that day to this I have never seen her face. But, come what will, I shall always say there is no face to compare with it on the border. There may be more beautiful women to others, but none to me."

" It was very noble in you to take her part, and then respect her secret, since she chose to make a secret of her name," said Willie. " Wherever she is, she must respect you for that act; and trust me, if she is a true woman, there are times when she wishes she had not refused to let you know her name."

" I only did a man's part in protecting her from insult," said the major. " But what a lad you are; surely you have had an education above the ordinary rovers of the forest?"

" I will not deceive you, major; I have indeed had a good education. Do not ask me how or where I received it; I am glad I have it, for it enables me to understand better the rights and duties of life, and to appreciate and enjoy the beauties in nature. Shall you ever seek to find the girl you saved?"

" She has tied my hands; it is a point of honor not to do it. I shall never be able to love another woman, for I can not get her out of my head. When I am asleep I have visions of her beautiful face and the white little feet glancing through the clear water of the rill."

" Perhaps she too has visions; indeed, if she is a true woman she can not forget you came to her rescue in the hour of

danger, have respected her foibles—she must often think of you. It is a woman's bane that she is always looking forward to something unattainable, something which, in the nature of things, and in the present state of society, she can never be. If you knew this girl you might be able to win her heart; but you would tire of her, doubtless. Her amusements would not suit you; in your social intercourse you would find defects in her education, and doubtless would find the effect of the half-wild forest life stamped upon her manners and tastes. It is better as it is that you should know her and perhaps break her heart."

"My little philosopher, I am half inclined to be angry with you. Do I look like a man to be false to a woman? Not I, believe me! 'True as truth,' that is my motto, and I keep it firmly."

"I think you do keep it," replied Willie; "still you must allow that she was right. She knew nothing of you beyond your name; she could not know that you were any better than the many thoughtless, good-hearted, but careless young men who officer our army. She but acted the part of wisdom in doing as she did."

"I would give much to know her name; I should like to prove to her that I am no man to be feared, no matter what her degree or mine."

"You may know her some day. Strange accidents happen in this world, and you may be brought together. Ah, what is that?"

"Where?"

"Some one is listening to us," said Willie, in a low tone; "as I turned I caught a glimpse of a head disappearing through the trap-door. Do not seem to notice it; if it is the person I think, we shall see him again. I will watch. Talk of any thing you like; he will come soon."

They dropped into a conversation about the Indians and the proposed attack, while both of them kept their eyes on the trap. In a moment more the coonskin cap of Bill Eagan rose slowly above the opening.

"Eagan," said the major, coolly. "Come here. I want you."

The fellow, taken completely by surprise, crawled through

the hole, and came forward, a look of chagrin on his dark face.

"What did you want?" demanded Major Seely.

"I wanted to see you, major," said the fellow, turning his small dark eyes for a moment on the face of Willie, who stood in the dark shadow. "You seem to be busy."

"Why did you come in that way? Now understand me. I will not have a *sneak* in my command—that I am determined upon. You have been listening to what we were saying."

"Major, if—"

"Not a word! You were listening to our conversation, I know you were, you were caught in the very act."

"But, major—"

"Silence! You know that you can not deceive me. Such conduct as this is unbecoming in a man of my regiment. I will not endure it. Perhaps you will find some regiment where the officers permit eavesdropping, but this is not one of them."

"Yer hard on a chap, major," said the man, with a look of hatred which the darkness more than half disguised.

"Not at all. It is in my power to punish you severely. I would do it to most men, with the hope of curing them. But, you are not the sort of man for that. The moment we get to our camp, you shall be exchanged into another regiment."

"You don't expect ever to git to camp, major. I know you won't."

"Go to your duty, sir. Or, first, what had you to say to me?"

"I wanted to ask you to give up, and give us a chance to save our lives."

"You can only save your life by fighting for it. Do not make me think you a coward as we... as an eavesdropper. Come to your place, and let us hear no more of this. I am competent to say when we shall surrender."

The man sullenly retired.

"You can not trust that fellow, Major Seely," said the boy. "I told Jake as much not long ago. He is a traitor at heart. I know him well."

"I never liked him. Once in camp, he shall leave my regiment."

"Hark!"

Both heard a low sound, as of many feet moving with a stealthy tread across the meadow.

"I believe they are coming, Willie," said the major. "Run down and tell Jake to stand ready."

Willie hurried down, and gave Jake the alarm. Catching up the small rifle which he had placed against the wall upon first entering the fort, the lad ran back to the parapet beside which the major was lying.

"They are coming," said that officer. "Give me that rifle. I see one of the scoundrels; a shot at him will wake the rest. There is no use dallying. Pass the word to light the fire in the center of the block."

Wood had been laid ready, so as to make a large fire within the block. At the command, this was lighted, and the flames, streaming up, illuminated the scene for some yards about the work. The major could now see his man clearly, and fired. The savage gave one cry, and his strong limbs ceased to move.

The battle commenced in earnest. Many dark forms darted into the lighted circle only to be greeted by the fire of the rangers' rifles. Several of the assailants fell dead; as many were wounded, and in the end some were driven back, while others obtained a lodgment under the walls of the work.

"We have come well out of that," said Seely, drawing a deep breath. "There is no fear of the fellows under the wall. They can not climb the sides. The rest have retired. But, stand to your guns there. They will be at us again in a moment."

"Of course they will," said Jake. "But, I'm Jake Dowdle, the rarer. I'm a tough colt. Didn't we give them particular goss, for about a minnit? Hul'lo, what are yer doing at that gate, Bill Eagan."

"I was trying to see ef they were in sight," replied Eagan. "Let's go out an' clean these chaps from under the wall."

"You put up that bar ag'in, if you know what is good for you," cried Jake, as he saw Bill take down one of the heavy bars before the door. "Do you want 'em to come in yer an' raise that han'sum ha'r of yours? Put it up."

"You licked 'em this mornin'. I didn't think you'd be afraid to foller, Jake Dowdle."

"'Fraid!" bawled Jake. "Say that ag'in; oh, say it ag'in,

an' I'll go through you like a young 'arthquake, I will by thunder. Don't say nothin' to me, you durned skunk, for I kain't b'ar it. 'Fraid?"

"That's what I said," replied Bill "I ask you to go out an' fight Injin. You don't dar' to do it, seems to me."

"Don't, eh? Now, who will foller us? Will you, Tom Aiken? Will you, Ben? Of course you won't. You ain't quite fools. So, me an' Bill will go eas together."

Bill had taken down the bars and was about to open the gate, when a light form dropped suddenly from the upper room, and faced him, rifle in hand.

It was Willie Leslie.

"Stand back!" cried he, in a firm voice. "Do you hear me? Jake, I warned you to be careful of this fellow. Twenty Indians lie in wait behind the door, to rush in the moment it is opened. This man is a traitor; I know it!"

"Git out of the way, you little hop o' my thumb," said the man, savagely. "I warn you; no nonsense, now."

"Put up the bar, Jake. I tell you that double your number of savages lie under the wall. I looked over and saw them."

"But, he dared me to go," said Jake. "I must foller."

"He goes among friends—you among enemies. He can afford to be brave. Put up the bar, I say."

"Obey him," said the major, looking down from above. "Some of you seize that villain. This shall not be overlooked. He will betray us, if he can."

Two of the men seized the half-breed and bound him, in spite of his struggles. The rest kept watch from the loopholes.

"Let me go! Don't let that *inje* devil swear away the life of an honest man. Let me go! Don't think to escape me after this, young 'un. I know you!"

"If we hear any more from you, I shall order you to be gagged," added the major, sternly.

Bill became silent. The Indians outside were restless. Evidently something had happened to disconcert their plans. Those outside the circle of light began to utter yells of anger which were answered by those under the wall.

Their plans evidently had been disconcerted by the action

of the boy. Bill lay on the ground, grating his teeth, and muttering invectives on every one, but especially upon Willie.

"I'll make you sweat for this," he growled. "Don't think I'll let up on you when I onct git ye under my thumb. No nonsense now. I won't stand a bit of it. You let me up. I ain't goin' to lay hyar when thar's work to be did."

"You've got to lay thar, old man," said Jake. "Rot yer picter, did I ever trust ye? Not a bit! I allus thought ye a condemned mean critter, I allow. So don't say no more."

"I know *you*, Jake Dowdle, the rag-man!" roared Bill. "I'll make you suffer tears of blood for this yer. Come, let a chap up. What's the use of kerryin' a joke *too* fur? I like a joke ez well ez any one, but, blame a joke when it's kerried too fur. I don't like it. Jest untie this hyar rope."

"Not jest now," said Jake. "Now you shet yer mouth, or mebbe you mout git a hitch on yer *tongue* ez well ez on yer feet. We ain't jest the boys to fool with. Keep still!"

"But, that ain't it, old comrades," said Bill, in a supplicating tone. "See yer. I've tramped the woods long o' you a good many years, off an' on, an' it ain't fair fur ye to take the word of a boy that don't know nothin', ag'in' a man of my experience. 'Taint, true ez ye live. I want to git up. I want to help ye, ef ye *will* fight."

"We don't want any help, do we, boys?" said Jake.

The men answered by a derisive cheer. The face of the prisoner darkened. He saw that his companions would not trust him.

"Black blood and black heart," added Jake. "Ye meant to betray us. I see it all, now that my blood is cool. I ain't authin' more to say to ye, Bill. Keep still."

"I'll hev somethin' to say to *you*, some day, mebb," rejoined Bill. "I don't want no querrel, but a querrel it must be, ef ye act this way toward yer best friends."

They were interrupted by cries of anger from the outside. The Indians under the wall were becoming annoyed at being penned up, without a chance of aiding in the attack, or of getting back to their friends. Jake laughed.

"That was a nice trap he set fur us, boys," he said. "He bragged ag'in' me till I opened the gate, we'll suppose. I'd 'a done it, too, only the boy stopped me. Thar's nigh twenty-

five red-skins down thar. We mout possibly 'a licked 'em, but don't ye see it would hev taken all hands tu du it, an' while we was at it the big chief an' the rest of the gang would hev been on our backs."

"In course!" shouted the men.

"Cut his durned throat!" roared another.

"Shoot him!" "hang him!" "burn him!" were the various ejaculations which greeted the prisoner. He turned as pale as his sallow complexion would permit, and gasped for breath. He had good reason for fear. These borderers knew no law but the law of the wildwoods. Their stern code had various punishments for various offenses, from which there was no escape. Bill knew this well, and that the deadly glances which fell on him from every side had a stern meaning. He writhed in his bonds, and hoped that rescue might come soon. In such a strait, a man must have very strong nerves who can remain silent.

"See hyar, Jake; what are ye goin' to do with me?"

"Never mind," said Jake. "Listen to that jubilee outside. Oh, I wish Seth Warner *would* come."

"Who?" asked Willie.

"Seth Warner."

"If you expect him, you are on a wrong scent. He is camped on the other side of the lake, on the long point."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes."

"Did he show any signs of moving?"

"No."

"Then thar hez been a mistake, and we hev only ourselves to depend on. Never mind; we kin only do our best. But, I wish *you* was miles away."

"Hist," said the boy. "Don't you see that Bill is looking at us?"

"So he is! You don't think he suspects?"

"I'm not sure. You can tell nothing by a half-breed's face. I am afraid he begins to know me. If he should, my danger would be doubled. He hates me already."

"He won't trouble anybody long," said Jake, in a gloomy tone. "I don't half like to do it, but he brung it on himself. Whose fault is it ef the durned skunk would turn traitor?"

"It's his nature. Such men must do villainy, and always are dangerous. This is one."

"Wal, he ain't goin' to trouble nobody long," said Jake.

"You don't mean to say you will kill him?" said the boy, with a shudder. "That shall not be done."

"It ain't with me. It rests with the boys an' the major. Ef he says we kain't hang the black cuss, I s'pose we kain't, though the Rangers ain't used to obeyin' every order an officer likes to give."

"Take care, Jake. Yonder is an Indian."

"Looking through the loop, Jake could see a savage climbing a solitary tree in the middle of the opening. The scout could easily have brought him down, but, confident that he could do no harm there, he let him go up. They soon saw him perched upon the limb on the side toward the work, with a gun of some kind in his hand. As they looked, the weapon exploded, and they heard the sharp, whiplike crack of a rifle, and knew that it was the weapon of Bill, which the savages had retained. The sharp whistle of the bullet, within an inch of his head, warned the major that the man was a dangerous marksman, and must be driven out.

"Come up here, Jake," he said. "Bring Tom Staple with you."

Jake, calling to a long, lean-visaged hunter who stood near, the two ran up the ladder together. The major was crouching under the parapet; but, as the head of Jake shot up through the trap-door, a ball from the rifleman in the tree passed through his coonskin cap, cutting a furrow in his hair.

"Spot that fellow, boys," said the major; "but be careful. He is not a bad shot for an Indian."

The deadly rifles of the two bordermen were ready, and they stood up against the parapet, waiting for the man in the tree to show hand or foot. He did nothing of the kind until his rifle was loaded, and then, springing out on the limb, he again essayed a shot at Jake. Lightning was not quicker than the aim of the hunter, and, as the fire flashed from the muzzle of the rifle, the Indian dropped upon his knees. The moon was now

at its full, and a radiance, almost equal to daylight, covered the open plain. So brilliant was the light that they could plainly see the face of the wounded man, and even the minuteness of his dress and countenance.

An expression of pain distorted his face. The wound was in his heart, for they saw him raise his hand to it once or twice, in the endeavor to staunch the flowing blood. Even in agony, he strove to maintain his hold on the rifle; but slowly and surely, the heavy piece slipped from his nerveless fingers, and dropped to the earth. As it flashed downward in the moonlight, they could see that the savage began to despair.

He clung to life with wonderful pertinacity. The limb upon which he kneeled was full fifty feet above the earth, and he was slowly sinking, his wild eye fixed upon the block-house, from which the death-shot had come. A deep stillness had fallen upon the combatants, who, from either side, stood in the presence of death. A deep, solemn bass voice from the tree chaunted the death-song—a wild, weird, monotonous chant, calling down the vengeance of the St. Regis and the Great Manitou on the destroyer of his life. There is a sight which men seldom see twice—an Indian, in the death-agony, singing the death-song.

Every man in the block-house was gazing, with awe-stricken face, at the dying Indian. Dusky figures showed themselves along the edge of the woods, looking in the same direction. The end was near at hand.

Inch by inch, fighting for his life against the destroying angel, the savage sunk downward. He was resting one knee and hand upon the limb to support himself; but they could see that he wavered like a drunken man. All at once his form towered aloft, erect for a moment in the tree, and then, spreading out his hands, he plunged head foremost to the earth. A yell of rage and sorrow broke from the throats of his assembled friends, and they prepared to make an assault.

"Major!" roared Tom Staple, looking over the wall; "where's them Injins?"

"What do you mean?"

"All gone, major. While we've been 'tending to mister man in the tree they've sneaked away. That comes of

payin' any attention to the antics an' Injin cuts up. I'll never do it ag'in. What was it to us how long it took him to die?"

"If the Indians had been attacking us at the moment," said the major, "I must have stopped to look at the dyin' wretch."

"An' so they got away. It'd sarve us right ef we'd lost Bill too. Let's go down an' look fur him. 'Tain't no ten to one he ain't skyugled, *too*."

They ran down the ladder and found the place lately occupied by Bill deserted. The ropes which had bound his hands were gnawed asunder and lay upon the floor. The door was open; he had fled.

"Told you so," said Tom; "mout 'a knowed it. We all had to rush up hyar an' see that Injin die. It's the Lord's mercy them Injins took it into their heads to run afore he did; 'cause ef they'd 'a been thar, he'd a let 'em in an' we'd all 'a been gobbled. That's the way it looks to this creetur."

"We were very careless," said the major; "but the men who left the lower part of the block to come up here are most to blame. The step they took was unwarranted. To your duty now, every man. Where is Willie?"

"Eh?" said Jake, looking about him. "Where? Oh, I guess he staid up-stairs; don't you think so?"

"I know nothing of him. He was not there at all."

Jake hurried up the ladder, and came back looking very pale.

"That boy ain't thar," he said. "You don't think that durned skunk, Bill, made away with him, do you?"

"It is impossible. He could not have the heart to touch that boy," said the major.

"Mebbe he couldn't. I don't think he's got any heart; leastways, none to spare. But whar's the boy?"

"I fear some evil has befallen him."

"I don't think Bill would kill him, ef he could git him away without. It ain't that; thar's other reasons."

"What are they?"

"I can't tell ye, major; I'd like to, but, you see, I promised."

"Who?"

"Willie. I told him I'd keep mum. Thar's an old grudge ag'in him that Bill has held a long time. I can't tell ye what it is; but I don't think Bill has got the boy."

"Why so?"

"Cause the little chap would have made some fuss. He wouldn't die or be tuk easy. Thar'd be some mark of a scuffle. What's that, Tom?"

"That's a paper Jim found pinned to his loop-hole. You read it."

Jake took the paper from his hands; it was a small piece, and had a few words written in pencil.

"I guess you'd better read it, Tom," said Jake; "I'm ruther busy jest now."

"Ain't we *all* busy?" demanded Tom. "You kin read, can't you?"

"Read! Of course I kin read, only I ain't got time to waste."

"Give it to me," said the major, with a smile; "your valuable time should not be wasted on such trivial pursuits as reading."

"Tain't no use to a scout," said Jake; "he don't hev no readin' but his dispatches, an' they either come by word of mouth or in cypher, that nobody but the Gin'ral kin read. I kain't say I'm a *good* reader; I wrastled with the testament nigh about all winter onct, an' all I l'arned was how to make 'J. Dowdle,' an' to read a little. Written writin' ain't my kind."

"I guess it ain't," said Tom. "You couldn't read it, nohow."

"Could you?" demanded Jake; "I only ask you fa'r—could you?"

"Can't say I could," said Tom. "I mout have wrastled it down onct."

"This strange lad has gone of his own accord," said the major. "He has gone to bring help."

"Ah-ha!" said Jake; "jest like the boy. He would do it. What does the writin' say?"

"I will read it," said the major. "Hear what he says:

"DEAR MAJOR: Stand firm and keep off the enemy until morning. I will bring aid to you, or die in the attempt. If I fall (and you will know I am dead if I do not come back in two days) go to Jake Dowdle and he will tell you something which I have kept from you."

"What is the meaning of all this mystery, Jake?"

"Can't say, major, only it seems that the boy is gone. Don't you fret for him. He slipped away while we was lookin' at the man in the tree and got to his canoe. Once thar, he's safe. He ain't taken, neither, or we'd 'a heard from it. Thar!"

"A chorus of joyful yells from the woods announced that something new had turned up. Jake understood it.

"That means that Bill has got to them safe. Shows that they knew all about him—a danged half-breed pup. I'll make him sick some day. Git to yer guns. They ain't goin' to wait long afore they give us another try. An' all we've got to do is to keep 'em off till Willie comes."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### A SALUTE AND AN ADIEU.

THE surprise attending the escape of the boy had hardly passed, when the block was suddenly assailed furiously from all sides. Heavy strokes from axes and clubs fell upon the doors, and the Indians, with great resolution, attempted to climb the smooth side of the house. But, if the assault was sudden and fierce, the defenders fought with equal desperation. And such a body of men, under the leadership of a man like Major Seely, covered by strong wooden walls, and armed with rifles, are not easily beaten. After a desperate assault, the St. Regis fell back in confusion, full of hate against the defenders, whose cheers rung out in the clear air of night. Not a man had been lost by them, while the Indians had suffered severely. The giant chief had fought bravely and exerted his prodigious strength to the utmost in the endeavor to break through the door. They heard the voice of Captain

Jean at times, and one of the men got a shot at him. It had missed, however, and Captain Jean took off his hat in the moonlight, and made a polite bow toward the block.

All through that night it was a scene of attack and repulse. The giant chief was determined to succeed, and used every artifice suggested by Indian customs, but in vain. He was met at every point by the forest wisdom of the rangers, and foiled.

Captain Jean was in any thing but good-humor. The obstinacy of the defenders was wearing out the good-humor for which he was so noted. He took the chief aside as the morning advanced, with a flushed face.

"We are having poor success," he said.

"Captain Jean can see that the St. Regis have done their best," said the chief. "If there is one place where they fail, let him point it out. The red-men are very simple, but they know our white brother is very wise. They look to him to tell them what to do."

"Perdition! I can not tell. These devils fight as if every man was a dozen. I would like to take them, if only to show our men at Ticonderoga what brave men are, and teach them how to fight when this imbecile, Abercrombie, comes against them. Pish! What is he, to attempt the defeat of such a man as Montcalm, who is a soldier, through and through."

"And is not Abercrombie a soldier?" demanded the giant.

"He a soldier? No! Not as I speak of soldiers. A carpet warrior, if you please—a man who can fight well on a level plain, where his men can march and countermarch at will; but, when he comes up to the ragged battlements and abattis of Ticonderoga, he will find a different kind of fighting."

"Such as this?" said the giant, making a gesture toward the block.

"Exactly," said the captain. "Pish! You are a better soldier than Abercrombie already. But, what do you say? Shall we make another attack?"

"Yes," said the chief. "Another, and yet another, until the last of the St. Regis lies dead under the wall. How can

we give it up, when so many of our best and bravest are gone from among us, and the men who have slain them triumphant in the deed? Let not my brother think that the men of Wenona are weary of fighting, or will give over the combat. They will fight till the last."

"Right! I thought I knew my men. Now come on."

He had advanced a step in the direction of the block, when a new sound made him pause. It came from the lake near at hand, and, looking out upon the surface, they saw half a dozen dark objects moving on through the haze of the coming morning. A cry of surprise broke from them.

"What is that?" whispered Captain Jean, grasping the Indian by the arm.

"Balteaus!" answered the chief.

"Pass the word to the men then. We will give them a warm reception. Let not a shot be fired until they land, and then give it to them. Silence all."

The Indians found cover close to the shore. The batteau crept on slowly, and were seen to be full of men, most of them in the green coats of the rangers, a corps most dreaded by the Indians. Silently the savages made ready their weapons, gloating over the prospect of destroying this party of inveterate foes. The block was not more than a hundred yards from the lake. A man stood up in the leading boat, a small canoe, as it approached the shore, and shouted:

"Block. Attention!"

"Hello-o-o-o!" was the reply, in a voice which could only belong to Jake Dowdle.

"Stand firm until full daylight. If they attack you again, look out for us on their backs."

As the words left his lips the canoe was suddenly pulled back, and plunged into the haze. The Indians on the bank rose with yells of rage, and sent one useless volley after them to which the only reply was a laugh of derision, while a merry voice shouted:

"A nice little ambuscade, Captain Jean. But it did not work. Ha, ha, ha!"

"*Scelerats!*!" roared Captain Jean, now furiously angry. "Canaille! You dare not come and fight."

"We will come as soon as it is light enough to see the

thickets, captain ! You can not lead the rangers into an Indian ambuscade while holding them by the nose. Not a bit of it."

" You shall see."

" I hope I shall see *you* in the morning, captain. I can not offer you wine, but I can give you a drink of good whisky, if that will do as well."

The captain made no reply, and the dark objects disappeared in the gloom. The defenders of the block shook hands like men who had met after a long journey. Though they had been safe as yet, these persistent attacks were wearing them out.

" I'm glad we are well out of it," said the major. " That was the voice of Warner. I never felt so relieved in my life as when I heard his manly tones, coming out of the haze."

" Seth is the boy for my money," said Jake. " I'll do him a good turn some day for this. I hope Willie is safe. I wouldn't hev him hurt fur a farm. You can't tell how much store I set by that boy."

They did not give up their watchfulness, though no attack was made. As soon as the morning was bright enough, the batteaus again appeared, landing in the middle of the open space in front of the block. Skirmishers and scouts were thrown out at once, and beat the woods. Not an Indian could be found. The enemy, confident that they could do nothing against the well organized force which Warner brought with him, had silently retreated, and had now been on the march for more than an hour.

Warner left his command and hurried to the block, where he greeted the major with great cordiality, for they were sworn friends and comrades.

" I suppose you thought I would not come," said he. " It was a mistake of the scout whom you sent to me."

" Which scout did I send ? I have forgotten."

" Bill Eagan. It seems strange that a man of his experience should make such a mistake."

" The vile traitor ! It was a part of his plot. The villain led us into this danger, and now he has escaped to his red-skin friends."

" Bill Eagan ! Do you tell me that he is a traitor ?"

"I judge he is," said Jake. "A most confounded and eternal traitor he is too. And now I think of it, the fust time I see him I mean to do vi'lence to his feelings by takin' off his sculp. I will, by gravy."

"Explain. I do not understand," said Warner, who had always unbounded faith in the fidelity of Eagan. "It does not seem possible."

In a few words, the major explained.

"The scoundrel," said Warner. "That's right, Jake. Take his scalp the first chance you get and bring it to me, and you shal' have fifty pounds for it."

"It's a bargain," said Jake. "I s'pose you don't kecr ef I bring his head and body along with it?"

"Not at all. When you bring him, he shall hang high as Haman, I give you my word. He gave me your orders in this way. I was to remain at the next point below this, on the east side, until you came. There I was, resting in perfect confidence that you would come. About eleven o'clock, one of my men brought in a prisoner—that boy yonder."

The major followed the direction of his finger, and saw Willie standing near the first boat, talking with the men.

"Willie!"

"You know him, then?"

"Certainly! He was with me last night, but ran away in the confusion of an attack, and left word that he was going to bring aid. It seems he has done so."

"I was afraid to trust him at first, for I did not know but he was a decoy-duck, sent out by the French. But, whcn he gave all your names, and explained your position, I knew that his story must be true. Besides, the boy's face is in his favor."

"You may trust him with your life," said the major warmly.

"Do you know him very well?"

"Yes—no; I can't say that I do. But, there is something in his face which attracts me, in spite of myself. I will stake my existence that he will be true."

"That's a safe bet, too," said Jake. "Ef yew two don't know him, *I do!* I give you my word thar ain't his ekal anywhar, nor nowhar else than anywhar. He kain't be beat."

Though, to be sure, I hate to see a boy like him trampin' the woods."

"He is a brave lad at any rate," said Warner; "and as you say you know him, he shall have my fullest confidence from this hour. I am glad to find him true. Of course I got out the batteaus and started. I went with him in the canoe, and we were skylarking about here all through that last attack, before our boats came back. The lubbers managed to run down our canoe and stave a hole in her bow. One of them is at work patching the hole, for the boy says he must go."

"Go! Where does he mean to go? I must speak to him."

They walked down to the beach together. Willie looked up with a smile of rare beauty, as he recognized the major.

"I suppose you thought I was a coward, major," he said. "It wasn't that. I knew where Lieutenant Warner was camped, for I saw him when I came up. An idea came into my head that Bill Eagan might get away while you were watching the Indian in the tree, and I slipped down to look after him. The fellow was gone! So I wrote the note and pinned it to the loop-hole, where one of the men would be sure to see it when he fired, and ran out. I got my canoe out safe. Some one fired at me just as I struck the lake, and the ball went through my cap. See here!"

He held up the jaunty cap and revealed a round hole through which the bullet had gone. The major uttered a cry of horror.

"That was terribly near. You should be careful."

"It took my breath away when I looked at it," said the boy. "I was nearer death then than I have ever been, and I am afraid I was not thinking of the end as much as I ought. I was thinking of the major, and Jake, and all the boys, and how hard I should work to save them."

"My brave boy," said Seely. "You have the heartfelt thanks of every man here."

"Thank you, major. That pays me. I'm glad I did it now, and I do not mind the bullet. We must all take some chances in these times."

"You must not. You are too young to endure such

privations and dangers as these. There are men enough to do the fighting and scouting—men enough and to spare. I hope you will take my advice and go back to your friends."

"Friends?" said the lad, in a melancholy tone. "All the friends I have in the world are here."

"Have you no mother?"

"She died when I was a little child," replied the boy.

"Your father?"

An expression of terrible pain passed over the face of the boy. His head drooped upon his breast. "Do not speak of him," he said. "The loss was too recent. I can not bear it. Fresh wounds bleed freely, and though he was a rough borderman to others, he was the dearest of fathers, and the most faithful of friends to be found in the whole world."

"My poor boy," said the major. "I am sorry I probed that wound. Forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive. You meant kindly," said Willie.

"Yes, indeed. But, if you have no friends away from here, you have them here. Go with me. I will be to you an elder brother, one who will be true to you in all things."

The tears started into Willie's eyes.

"You can not tell," he said, "how I am touched by this kindness. I thank you from my heart. But, it is impossible for me to comply with your request."

"Reflect," said the major. "If you accept my offer, I will send you to my home near Albany. My mother and sister will welcome and love you for my sake."

"I can not, I can not," cried the lad. "I would give any thing to be able to do as I believe you would have me. Jake knows. He can tell you that there are reasons why I can not do it. But, he can not tell you what those reasons are. I forbid him."

"Shall I not see you again?" said the major. "I would not lose you."

"You shall see me again," said Willie. "I am afraid I can not keep away long. I value my friends."

"Take this ring and wear it," said Seely; "and, when you look at it, remember who gave it to you."

He took the ring and placed it on the largest finger of his

right hand. Seely noticed how small and delicate the hand was. Willie said good-by and entered his canoe. A hasty farewell was spoken, and the canoe sped away down the lake, hugging the western shore.

"Good-luck go with him," said Seely, "for, a braver lad I never saw."

"Nor I," said Warner. "But, I think it is time to go."

In ten minutes more the batteaus were in motion, headed down the lake, close to the eastern shore.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### ABERCROMBIE AND TICONDEROGA.

DOWN the beautiful lake, past islands heavy with the luxuriant vegetation of a northern summer, the dark-green of the trees relieved by the paler tints of the grass under foot, the batteaus swept on under the strong strokes of the rangers. Night came, and they slept on an island in the midst of the lake. Even in this apparently safe position their knowledge of forest warfare prompted them to place guards, before they lay down to rest. All was quiet about them. But, at the same time, Indian craft and French subtlety were working for their undoing.

In that hour of the night when the senses of men are deepest locked in slumber, the crack of the sentry's rifle roused them. Starting from sleep, they grasped their weapons and tood upon the alert. Major Seely had taken a precaution before lying down which was their salvation.

All around the island, close to the shore, he had caused the men to collect huge piles of combustible matter upon which heavy logs had been laid which would burn for a long time. His orders to the men were to light these upon the appearance of danger. When, mingled with the crack of the rifles, the yells of Indian vengeance broke upon their ears, the torches were applied to these piles, which in a moment broke into flames, and shed a bright light upon the scene. As the lurid

glow fell upon the water, it showed that it was dark with canoes and rafts hurrying to their destruction.

The fires so suddenly lighted, threw the savages into confusion. They stopped paddling and looked this way and that, in consternation and dismay. Upon one of the leading rafts the giant form of Wenona was seen, shaking his hatchet in the air, and shouting to his men to keep on. Three times Jake raised his rifle, pointed at that noble breast, and as often he turned it upon a less worthy victim. The rangers had darted to the bank, and were pouring in a close fire. The line of canoes and rafts wavered. Some of the less resolute turned to fly. Captain Jean knocked down two of the paddlers of his canoe because they refused to row on—lavishing upon them a choice collection of pure French oaths, to which they were utter strangers.

“*Sacré!*” he sputtered. “Imbeciles! You should be bakers. Soldiers disdain you. Turn again, or I will drive my sword to the hilt in your body. Twice before you have disgraced me before these Englishmen. Turn, turn, or your blood be on your own heads.”

Wenona aided him by voice and hand. But, by this time, the fire of the rangers was terrible. It was against Indian nature to remain upon the open water and be made a target for their rifles. One by one, the savages gave it up and turned their rude crafts the other way. Some man having less veneration for a majestic bearing than Jake, had wounded Wenona in the left shoulder, while the left arm of Captain Jean hung useless at his side.

Reluctantly, Wenona gave the signal to retire, and as quickly as arms strengthened by fear could do the feat, the motley group of canoes and rafts disappeared from that line of light, and the cheers of the rangers went ringing out on the night air. Wenona turned, with a lofty gesture, and shouted back his defiance.

“Triumph while you can, sons of the white men!” he shouted. “Wenona’s day must come sometime. You can not always win. Beware of the St. Regis, and of Wenona, the giant chief.”

“Go yer ways,” said Jake. “Ef ever there was an Indian we the av’ridge, then that thar’s one of ‘em. And ef ever

thar was a white man below the meanest of the mean in all creation, then that Bill Eagan is the man. Blame him eternally! I'd like to take the job of skinnin' him. I would, by gracious."

"The rangers are the boys," said Tom Staple, startling the hearers by a sudden imitation of a cock. "Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo-oo! Whoo-oop. Bring on yer Sixtieth Rifles! Bring on the best men among the red-coats, and they can't come up to the boys in the green jackets. Ye-e-e-up!"

"Don't make so much noise, Tom," said Warner, laughing.

"Don't try to stop me now, leftenant," said the man, pleadingly. "Don't! I kain't stand it. I'm full of it. Only think what the boys hev done this two days without losing a man except poor Ned. An' he was killed by a treacherous ball, I think from a rifle in the hands of a white man."

"Who?"

"Never mind."

"Speak out. What do you suspect?"

"Bill Eagan had a spite ag'in Ned. He'd swore to kill him some day ef he didn't look out. An' what man in the Indian band could hit a man whar he hit Ned? An' didn't the chief say it wasn't an Injin or a Frenchman that fired the shot? Now, I believe the chief. I know Bill Eagan to be a consarned scoundrel, ekal to any villainy. So I say, until I know better, Bill Eagan killed Ned."

"Right, old man," said Jake, slapping the speaker on the shoulder. "Them's my sentiments to a dot."

"Be a little keerful how you strike out at a man in that promisc'ous sort of a way, Jake Dowdle. I don't want eny more of your durned practical demonstrations."

"Prac—which?" roared Jake, astonished by the jaw-breaking phrase. "Now, don't do that ag'in. You kain't tell what mout happen a man that makes use of words like them when he ain't usen to 'em. I'll advise you to be keerful."

"I reckon a man can talk ez he has a mind to. That word's right. I know it, 'cause I hearn a feller in Albany ush it as orter to know. He was an officer in the rig'lars. One of the women whose husband was an ensign in the Loyal Rifles was a-walkin' the street, an' up steps this red-coat an' speaks to her. She tried to pass him, an' he tried to hold her.

She stopped, and beckoned to a young man in a green coat, on the other side of the street. He came over.

"What is it, Bella?" he said.

"This man has insulted me. He refuses to let me pass."

"Quicker than you could say 'scat,' bim! the red-coat got it right under the ear! He tried to get up an' got another on the nose. So he set up in the dust jest whar he was knocked down, an' sez he:

"I don't want no more of your practical demonstrations. That's whar I got the word. Now say I don't know when to use it."

Everybody laughed at the anecdote, delivered as it was in the quaintest style possible, with the queerest assumption of innocence. The story was itself a literal fact.

"Enough of this," said the major. "Guards, you have done your duty well, and enabled us to beat off an attack with the greatest possible ease, which five minutes later might have overwhelmed us all."

The guards looked pleased, as all men must who feel that they are receiving deserved praise.

"Continue, my brave fellows, to exercise the same vigilance and promptitude in every station in life in which you may be placed, and you can not fail to be successful at every point to which you seek to attain. I am pleased with you. Now, to your duty."

The men sprung to their posts with pleased alacrity. The night passed without further attack. Now that the rangers were upon their guard, the enemy knew well that it was useless for them to attempt any further assault. Next day they arrived in safety at the head of the lake.

The principal object in sending them out had been accomplished. Warner had picked up some information as to the position and plans of the enemy, and the major had not been idle. His scouts had left him repeatedly during his progress down the lake, bringing him in valuable news. Not the least valuable knowledge was that which betrayed the true character of Bill Eagan. At the head of the lake he met Abercrombie, with an army of sixteen thousand men, nine of whom were American and the rest regular British troops.

Lord Howe commanded "the center." He possessed what few British peers possessed at that time, the fullest confidence and esteem of the American troops. They looked to this young man to redeem them from the imbecility for which Abercrombie was noted. They hoped that, with this active, skillful young man at their head, they could achieve victory, which they could not win under any other leader.

He had an open, generous, kindly nature. A nobleman by birth and by gift of nature, he knew that the way to win the hearts of brave men was to treat them *as such*, not by domineering and supercilious conduct. The colonists were peculiarly constituted. Bred for the most part in the woods and on the farm, they had no patience with any thing that savored in the slightest degree of "snobbery." From this peculiar English failing Lord Howe was singularly free. It is no wonder that the men loved him. He would sit down by the camp-fire among a group of American officers, converse with them freely, sing his song or tell his story when "knocked down" for it; listen with grave deference to the modestly-urged advice of such men as Putnam, Stark, Warner and Seely—men whom he well knew were best acquainted with the plans of the enemy.

As the batteaus of Seely swept up to the landing, the young noble left a group of officers with whom he had been conversing, and advanced, meeting the major half-way.

"I am glad to see you safely returned, Major Seely," he said; "you also, Lieutenant Warner. Can you not leave your men in charge of a subordinate, and come to the tent of the Commander-in-chief. He waits only for you."

Of course the young men looked upon such a request in the light of an order, and, leaving the company in charge of an orderly, they followed Lord Howe to the marquee of Abercrombie. That officer had been impatiently awaiting their coming.

"You are somewhat dilatory, Major Seely. Let me ask you to explain your delay?"

The major flushed. He was not used to being addressed in that manner, after a return from a service of great difficulty and danger.

"I beg your pardon, General," he said. "I hope to be able

to convince you that I have spent no more time than was absolutely necessary."

"And if there is need of any further proof than his word," said Warner, "I am ready to substantiate his statements."

"Ah, indeed," said Abercrombie; "and whom have I the honor of addressing?"

"I beg your pardon," said Lord Howe, interposing. "I thought you were acquainted. Let me introduce to your favorable regard, my *friend*, Lieutenant Warner, of the Loyal Rangers."

Abercrombie nodded. He understood the form of introduction. Lord Howe wished to imply that he would not allow any slight to the young men.

"Your report, gentlemen," said the Commander-in-chief. "What have you seen?"

"Ticonderoga is defended by between four and five thousand men," said Seely.

"We have nearly four times that number," answered the English commander.

"Not a man too many, for we go to attack men in a strong work, while we are on the open field," responded Seely.

"I have never heard that Ticonderoga is so remarkably strong, sir," suggested the General, with a slight sneer.

"Nevertheless it is so," said the major. "Not only has it great natural strength; but Montcalm has, with great skill, added abattis and outworks hard to break through."

"We shall soon see about that. How is it you were so long in making your report?"

"I was attacked by Indians, and besieged in an old blockhouse."

"Oh!" said Lord Howe, his fine face in a glow. "I would I had been with you. How did you escape?"

"Warner came to my rescue. We were again attacked upon an island in the lake, but managed to beat the red rascals off."

"How is it that my own troops so rarely find these much feared Indians?" asked Abercrombie, with a half-sneer. Seely understood him, and his hot blood boiled over at the implied insult.

"Chiefly, sir, because they take pains to keep away from places where they are likely to meet them. Braddock met them, it seems. And I tell you, sir, that had it not been for the troop of Colonel Washington, of Virginia, not a man of the regulars would have seen home again."

"This is extraordinary language, sir," said the General, springing to his feet,

"Major Seely," said Lord Howe, "you must remember a whose presence you are."

"I do remember, my lord," said the young major. "But, in my humble judgment, the words of General Abercrombie implied a doubt of the truth of my report, which, as a gentleman and a soldier, I am bound to resent."

"I am sure General Abercrombie could not intend to insult a friend of mine, whom I know to be a gallant soldier," said Lord Howe.

"Certainly not," said Abercrombie. "I withdraw the expression."

"And if I said any thing in the heat of the moment which I ought to apologize for, I do so apologize," said the major. "Now, if you please, I will finish my report."

This was soon done. Shortly after the great flotilla which had been prepared was in motion, bearing down toward Ticonderoga, the gateway to Canada.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### TICONDEROGA.

ALL that day, and through the night, the English flotilla toiled on, and next morning the troops landed on the northern side of the lake. Before them lay a thick and almost impenetrable forest, into whose dark passes the regular troops looked with any thing but confidence. They did not like the appearance of those somber retreats. These men had stood up bravely upon the grassy plateaus of Spain and Germany, but never on a battle-field like this

The rangers went to the front, and cheerfully, too. They had the position they coveted, the post of danger. They were the men to search out the secret places in the woods, and be sure that no Indians lay in the coverts. On they went, and as they went deeper into the wilderness, yells of warning on the front and flanks told them that savages were slowly retiring before the dreaded rifles, and gathering beyond.

"Indians," was the word. "Pass the word to the rear. Caution!"

Lord Howe heard the word as it came back, and ordered out Putnam and the remainder of the rangers by request of Seely. In spite of all they could say, the gallant young man would go with them.

"I wish you wouldn't do it, my lord," said the bluff Putnam. "The men trust you. I don't know what to say if any thing happens to you, in regard to the safety of the enterprise. Pray stay with the main body."

"Impossible," said the young noble. "I am eager to see your rangers go into battle. My dear sir, you must allow me to go."

"Of course, if you *will* go, I can not oppose you, my lord. Attention, men; forward, quick time, march."

The rangers dashed into the thicket, and soon came up with Seely's command, who were slowly feeling their way into the thicket, knowing well that the enemy were close in their front. As the companies joined, a light form bounded suddenly from the undergrowth, and stood by the side of the major.

"Willie!" cried the major. "How came you here, my dear boy? This won't do at all—not by any means. Return to the army cantonments."

"There is as much danger in returning as in staying here," said Willie. "No, no, major. Let me stay."

"Don't let him, major," said Jake, in a hoarse tone. "It won't do. I give ye my word it *won't* do. Send a couple of the boys back with him. I'd never forgive myself if any thing should happen to him."

Jake was visibly excited and earnest.

"I won't go back," said the boy. "Don't ask me to do it."

"If you don't go without," said Jake, in an angry tone, "I'll tell! So go back."

They saw the brown cheek of the lad grow pale.

"You dare not do that, Jake Dowdle! Remember that you have given me your word," was the determined reply.

"I won't keep it if you run into danger, blamed if I do," rejoined Jake. "But hark! Indians on the banks. You can't go back now. It's too bad—too bad!"

"Neither can I," added Lord Howe. "That's very lucky. I see by the eye of my friend, the major, that he was about to order me to return."

"Advance," cried Putnam, "and sweep the thicket with your rifles."

The rangers uttered yells rivaling those of the savages, and darted forward. As they did so, a body of men rose suddenly from the thicket and poured in a close and destructive fire. Seely had time to catch a glimpse of the giant form of Wenona, the commanding figure of Captain Jean, and the minister face of Bill Eagan, when the latter raised his rifle and fired. A cry of horror was heard among the rangers, and, as Seely looked back, he saw Lord Howe reeling to the earth, all his promise of a glorious future ended by that traitor's shot.

"Forward all!" shouted Putnam.

"Avenge him!" cried Seely.

The rangers heard the cry. Not a man among them but knew and loved the gallant man who lay dead. The contest was close and bloody; and, in the end, the rangers were triumphant. But, they returned with drooping banners, bringing the noble dead.

His death was a terrible blow to the enterprise. As has been said, he was a man in whom the colonists especially had the fullest confidence, while they did not trust Abercrombie in the least. There is reason for the belief that the Commander in-chief did not grieve very much at the death of Lord Howe. The young officer was too well beloved in the army, and they made invidious comparisons between the two Generals. This, too, was ended by that traitor hand.

The army stumbled on through the tangled thickets, until, breaking through them, they reached the bit of broken

open country immediately around Ticonderoga. This fortress of the north was, at the time, one of the most important on the frontier. It was situated upon the outlet to Lake George, upon a peninsula elevated one hundred feet above the level of Lake Champlain, and surrounded, on three sides, by rocks, steep and difficult of access. The only available approach to it was by the neck of the peninsula, which was itself in part covered by a swamp and the rest defended by a breastwork. Three large creeks enter Lake Champlain at this point—Wood and East creeks, and the outlet to Lake George. At the point where Wood creek enters the lake, upon the western side of the same, stood Mount Defiance, an eminence seven hundred feet in height, commanding the main fort completely.

The English took advantage of this fact during the Revolution, to drive St. Clair out of Ticonderoga. But, at this time, there was hardly footing for a cat upon its rugged sides.

The engineer of Abercrombie was sent out to make a survey. Either he knew nothing of his business, or he did not make any survey, through fear. However that may be, his report was favorable. He stated that the works were of little or no strength, and could easily be carried. Abercrombie sent out orders to prepare for the assault, and then sat down to dinner. While thus engaged, an orderly brought word that a boy wished to see him.

"A boy, sergeant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know him?"

"No, sir. I never saw him in the army before. He came with Putnam just now."

"Admit him. I need not stop my dinner for him."

Willie was shown into the marquee. Abercrombie cast an amused glance at him, and went on with his meal.

"Well, my boy, what is your name?" he demanded.

"Willie Leslie, sir."

"And what did you want with me?" asked the General, raising a morsel of meat to his lips. "I am engaged just now, and, if your business is not important, I do not care to hear it until after dinner."

"It is important, sir."

"Really? Then out with it."

"May I ask if you have ordered an assault on the works, sir?"

"Yes."

"And your engineer has told you that you can carry them with the greatest ease?"

"Yes."

"Then your engineer knows nothing about it," said Willie, stoutly. "When he says that the work is not strong, he says that which is untrue."

"You are a bold youngster," said Abercrombie. "My engineer is a man of rare ability, a man who has been educated in the best military schools in the world; and do you come here and oppose your knowledge to *his*?"

"I repeat what I said," said Willie. "He knows nothing about it. Here is a map of the works, as I have observed them, assisted by the knowledge of Major Seely, and Lieutenants Warner and Stark."

"How these colonists stick together! Now, that fellow Stark has been at me before, opposing his knowledge of the ground to that of my engineer. Very well. Let me see this precious map."

Willie took a piece of white paper from his pocket and spread it out before the General, on the table. Upon this paper was a well-defined ground-plan of the vicinity of Ticonderoga, with the hills plainly marked, the watercourses and swamps laid down. Indeed, a map accurate in every respect.

"You will see here," said the boy, laying his finger on the map, "on the north, Lake Champlain, inclosing a peninsula of five hundred acres. The fort is upon that peninsula."

"I see," said the General.

"This peninsula is connected with the mainland by a narrow neck of land. On both sides of this neck, rugged rocks, impassable to horses and nearly so to men, guard the approaches. There is only one way of approach. That is by the neck."

"Precisely."

"I have laid it down here. One half of this neck is

covered by a swamp, through which you can not pass. The other half has a breastwork, which is here laid down. It is in relation to this breastwork that your engineer has deceived you. It is very strongly built, and they have felled trees, with the boughs pointing outward, forming an impenetrable abattis."

"This is merely a repetition of what Stark told me," said the General, impatiently.

"John Stark understands his business, sir. But, to proceed: you have force enough to take Ticonderoga; but, you have *not* force enough to rush furiously against their breastworks and carry them by storm. Your effort must assume the proportions of a regular siege. Your approaches must be slow and steady, that the end may be sure."

"Upon my honor!" cried Abercrombie, laying his hand with mock sclemmony on his heart, "I am obliged to you for your kindness in laying your plans before me. Allow me, however, to decline the benefit of the action of the master minds from which this plan emanated, thanking you for your kindness."

The cheeks of the lad flushed at the sneer, and he gathered up his papers hastily.

"Do not think, sir, that we lay this plan before you from interested motives. Not one among us but has the good of England and these colonies at heart, and not one among us who can, without regret, witness the destruction of one of the most gallant armies that ever trod the soil."

"What do you mean, boy?"

"I mean that you will force the attack upon yonder breastwork; the army will be beaten back, broken and in disorder our best men will be sacrificed because the General refuses to take the counsel of men who know the ground, and prefers the advice of strangers to the soil. I bid you good-day."

There was a certain lofty strength in the bearing of the boy which confused Abercrombie; something beyond his years. Before the angry General had time to recover from his surprise, the curtain of the marquee had dropped, and the boy was gone.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE ASSAULT.

IN the confusion of the assault in which Lord Howe lost his life, although the attack upon the rangers was repulsed, the troops fell back in disorder, some even retiring to the landing-place; and Abercrombie found it impossible to carry out his plan of making an attack on the 6th. It was not until the morning of the 8th that the whole army was again in motion, this time really to assault. Abercrombie, with all his faults, possessed the bull-headed obstinacy of his race, and the belief that no good thing could by any possibility come out of the advice and suggestions of men not "educated to arms" in the schools of Europe.

Willie had again attached himself to the company of Seely, and, when the rangers were pushed forward as before, accompanied them. The major, seeing that he could not detach the boy from his side, appointed him his aid. To be useful, and at the same time near the major, seemed to be the ambition of the lad. Once the major saw him in close conversation with Jake Dowdle. The scout seemed to be urging some request with great pertinacity, and the boy as persistently refused.

"You are under my orders," said Jake, at last. "What if I order you to go away?"

"Then I shall obey you," said the boy, sadly. "But, Jake, if, as you say, you care for me, do not give me that order. You know, too, how impossible it is for me to go away willingly. No, Jake; for the sake of old times, let me be with the major in this battle, and then, if we come out well, I promise you that I will go away."

"Will you promise to be keerful of yourself now?" demanded Jake. "I seen that scoundrel, Eagan, this very day, a-fightin' in the ranks of the inimy. A black-hearted villain, an' nothin' else. I hope I kin only git a shot at him. But, that ain't it. He hates you, and he knows you. Remember

what he said when he lay on the ground ! 'I know ye,' ~~sez~~ he. So, look out fur him ! Now mind, ef I let you stay hyar to-day, you *must* go back to the place I told you 'bout, an' stay thar till I come. Will you?"

"Yes, Jake."

"Then forrad, an' the Lord keep you out of the hands of Bill Eagan!"

"Amen," said the boy. The rangers were on their way, through tangled bush and brake, rousing now and then a skulking Indian, or perhaps losing a man by a volley. Advancing slowly, they drove the skirmishers, until they saw before them the breastwork which was to be assaulted. Montcalm had not lost those two precious days. A perfect forest of felled timber occupied the space in front of the glacis, the sharpened branches pointing outward. Major Seely could not repress a gesture of impotent rage as he saw the work before which he must lose so many of his brave followers.

"Curse the blind stupidity of some men," he muttered, involuntarily. "What a fate is in store for us. And yet, an overwhelming force may do it. There is nothing like trying. Cheerily, men. Lay low in the bushes. We've driven them into their holes already. It only remains to smoke them out."

The men laughed cheerfully. They had confidence in their leader, at least. They lay in the cover until the recall of skirmishers was sounded, and then fell back to take their places in the line of battle, which was forming in front of the works.

Few among them imagined that they could be successful. Indeed, the loss of Lord Howe, in whom they trusted, had fallen like a blight upon them. Yet, when the assault sounded, they went forward with wild cheers.

With the main attack our story has little to do. History tells us of that dreadful slaughter of brave men. The rangers, in company with other provincial regiments, had attacked the left of the breastwork in their peculiar style, lying down to load, rising to their knees when firing, each one sighting his man, and dropping the moment the shot was delivered.

The Frenchmen respected this style of fighting so much that they were careful not to show their heads too far above the breastworks. Under cover of their terrible fire a division organized and attacked the French works. The rangers could not remain inactive. They sprung up, and carrying their officers with them, led the assault. In moment they were fighting hand to hand with the defender of the work, striking out gallantly.

Prominent among the defenders of the place, the major recognized Captain Jean, and, not far away, his inseparable companion, Wenona.

"We meet once more," cried the captain, as they crossed blades. "St. Denis, I am glad."

The sharp hiss of the steel sounded like a snake suddenly roused. There was no anger in the eyes of either Captain Jean or the major. Each felt a sort of stern joy, as their hands gripped the sword-hilts with determined force. The breastwork was just high enough to keep them separated nicely, and the ground was even on both sides. As they stood, neither could press the other.

"The one who retreats first," said Captain Jean, with compressed lips, "is beaten. Let it be understood."

As he spoke the major made a quick movement, a simple disengagement, nothing more, and ran the captain through the wounded left arm. He repaid the wound by a thrust which the major warded off with the dagger in his left hand.

"*Sacré!*" cried the captain; "can I make no return? Have at you again."

The determined rush of the men of Seely had gained them a foothold within the stockade. Even the major had crossed the breastwork after wounding the captain. By his side, holding a pistol in either hand, was Willie. His beauty attracted attention on all sides. No one attacked him, and he assaulted no one; but, it was plain from his looks that he intended to defend himself, if assailed, to the best of his ability.

In that fierce struggle, hand to hand, the eyes of the boy followed the motions of the major. Once, during the combat with Captain Jean, the lad had warded off a blow aimed at his superior's life, and Jake Dowdle immediately cut down

the assailant by a stroke of his hatchet, with which he was fighting in the foremost rank of the rangers.

If Willie watched the major, the eyes of Jake were always fixed upon *him*, with strange solicitude.

In the temporary truce between Seely and Captain Jean, as each leaned exhausted on his sword, Willie's eyes were fixed upon the form of a man who was struggling to the front from the opposing lines. It was Bill Eagan. An expression of savage joy lit up his wolfish face as he sprung upon the lad.

"Ah-ha! I've got ye, hev I? I waited long enough. Yer my prisoner."

Crack, crack! went the two pistols, close to his head. One cut a deep furrow in his right cheek, spoiling his beauty for ever. The other ball broke the bone of his left fore-arm. With a wild howl, he leaped forward, but was met by Jake, eager as the bloodhound for his game. The expression of his face was awful.

"Stand back thar," shouted the scout. "'Twas you killed Ned, curse ye for a sneak and a traitor."

Avoiding the rush of his enemy, Bill leaped back into the ranks of the French; but, as he turned to flee, with a horrible curse he discharged a pistol full at the breast of Willie. A pallor came into the face of the lad, and he sunk bleeding at the major's feet. The latter was still engaged in the sword-contest with Captain Jean. When the boy fell, he dropped his sword and sprung to raise him. At that moment, when he was at the mercy of Captain Jean, the true spirit of the gentleman and soldier showed itself. The captain made a low bow, and, turning on his heel, plunged into the fight in another direction.

A cry of grief and horror broke from Jake as the major lifted the head of the wounded boy upon his knee, and tore open his jacket to find the wound. As he did so, he too uttered a cry, and looked at Jake with a questioning gaze.

"A woman!" he cried. "Who is she, for heaven's sake?"

"Nattie Weston," said Jake. "The gal her father left to my keer—an' see how keerful I've bin of her."

Just then, the bugles sounded the recall, and lifting the girl in his arms, the major gave the order to his men to retreat. They fell back in good order, presenting their threatening rifles to the foe.

That great army was beaten by foolhardiness and obstinacy. Covering the rear, as they had before guarded the front, came the rangers, ever ready.

The wounded girl, as Willie had so mysteriously turned out to be, was with them on the retreat. The major would not allow her out of his sight, and, as they retraced their steps over the tangled way, she was carried in a blanket in the hands of six stalwart rangers, the major walking near by.

No woman could have been more gentle with her than these rough, bearded men. The surgeon had dressed the wound, and pronounced it a bad one, though not really dangerous. Whenever she opened her eyes, they rested on the face of the major or of Jake, their eyes fixed on hers with a glance of anxious solicitude. They had taken off her cap, and the short, dark curls which had been confined by a band under it, dropped upon her neck, which was white and shapely. The beautiful eyes, which they had so admired when they knew her only as Willie Leslie, seemed more brilliant yet in the woman. The pain of her wound appeared to distress her but little, and she smiled when they asked her how she felt, in a way that went to the hearts of the rough men who surrounded her.

"How *could* you come here?" said Jake, in a reproachful tone. "Don't you know it would *hev* broke my heart ef you hed bin killed? I *told* you to go back; you know that."

"Don't let the major see my face too closely," whispered the girl in return; "and don't be cruel to me, father Jaco. You know I am your daughter now."

"And why don't you want the major to see your face?" asked Jake.

"Never mind; I have a reason which I can not tell you now. I don't know what induced me to follow the army this time, only it was *so* lonely at home, and every one away. I dressed in this way because I did not want any one to know me, and because a woman is not so safe as a boy. I wanted

to see some one—never mind who—and I thought now pleasant it would be to come into your camp and sit with you all in the summer evening and hear you talk; but, father—I shall never see him again."

She broke out into hysterical sobbing. Jake did his best to soothe her grief.

"Come, come, my dear girl; no more of that. I kain't bear it, nohow. Thar ain't a man in these colonies, no, not a single one, that will feel the death of your father more than I do. He was my friend always—the truest friend I ever had; and fer the man that shot him, woe be to his skin ef he ever comes within the reach of my weapon."

He was interrupted by the rattle of musketry, and the enemy rushed upon them again, thinking to sweep the English army from the face of the earth. But they stood like a rock, those faithful rangers, and gave them back shot for shot. Putnam, a little in front, rushed up with his men and formed a line on either flank, where, lying prostrate in the bushes, they kept up a fire which drove back the French and Indians. A body of French Canadians, under the leadership of Captain Jean Chartier, formed under cover of the under-growth, and, supported by the Indians in reserve, charged the line of Putnam and Seely. But these men were too wary in the wiles of bush-fighting to show themselves, and, lying there, they literally riddled that superb band of Frenchmen with their rifles.

No troop on earth could have withstood that fire. In a moment Captain Jean was standing almost alone, nearly in the center of the open space through which they had charged. His men had fled, and the captain, too brave to run, bared his bold breast to the riflemen and walked slowly backward.

"Captain Chartier!" cried the major, stepping to the front.

"I will not be a prisoner," retorted the Frenchman. "Fire, if you will."

"No," said Seely; "retire in safety; as you spared me to-day, so I spare you now."

"Thanks," said Captain Jean, coolly. "It is an even thing. But, *pardieu*, you always have the best of it."

As he spoke the bushes closed behind him, and the fight

again began. The rangers would not yield an inch, and it was only when the distant bugles sounded the recall that they slowly and reluctantly left the disputed ground to the enemy. The moment they began to give ground, the pressure on their front was renewed, though, by this time, the enemy had a wholesome fear of the deadly rifles.

It is not to be supposed that the exultant enemy failed to do their best. They knew that the more of that noble army escaped, the more they would have to fight some other day. These brave men, as they marched along, cursed the blind stupidity which had refused to listen to such men as Major Seely, and had followed the plans of a thick-headed engineer.

"I don't care," said Putnam, angrily, as he walked by the side of Seely. "D—n it, I will swear. What if he is the Commander-in-chief? I am a good enough man in my way, and always like to obey my superiors and act respectfully toward them; but I say, curse all thick-headed mules."

"What is the trouble now, Put?" asked Seely.

"Trouble! Trouble enough, I should say. A noble army sacrificed. You can tell how it went to my heart to see our brave fellows go at their abatis—a perfect forest of pointed stakes. By heaven! when the books are opened, there will be a heavy reckoning against General Abercrombie."

"He feels it badly enough," said Seely. "Don't load a fallen man. In his own way, he is a soldier—not one for the woods, to be sure, but still a soldier. He has been unfortunate in this expedition. We all do foolish things in our time. This is one of his worst."

"But we have lucid intervals," growled old Put. "Haven't we now? And can you say that this fellow has shown any sense throughout this miserable campaign? You can't say that. You don't dare! If he has me up and court-martials me, breaks me of my commission and marches me out of the regiment to the tune of the Rogue's March, I must have my say."

"That's all right, Put; only not too loud. As long as only our boys hear you, it is the right thing. But, some one might hear you who would carry tales, and that would never do."

"There's old Jake now," said Put. "Look at his face. If he had his say out he'd swear this was a foolish business

from first to last. Didn't that boy Leslie go to him with a plan of the fort, and show him what a stupid mess he was going to make of it? Didn't he? And the Englishman insulted him. That boy is gone, by the way. I hope he isn't k it."

"He is, though, Putnam. Is it possible you have not heard? That boy is not a boy, but the daughter of the scout who was shot in the boat on the lake when Warner helped us out of the block-house."

"You mean Ned?"

"Yes."

"Heavens! I've seen the girl, and a noble woman she is. Nattie, Ned called her. Where is she?"

The major pointed to the center, where, borne in a blanket, Putnam saw the girl. The rude foresters had made every thing as comfortable as possible. Some one had plucked the down from the fern known as the cat-tail, and wrapped it in a blanket for a pillow. They would have done any thing for her.

"Abercrombie is hurrying his flight," said Putnam, grimly. "He sees the advantage of having a good force of blue-coats in his rear now, though he did not see it before. They always learn a lesson about us before they quit. By Jove, if *we* boys ever have a quarrel with England, the red-coats will see who and what *we* are."

"It seems to me that Abercrombie is leaving too wide a space between us and the main body," said Seely, uneasily. "I care nothing on my own account, but this girl—"

"Must be saved at all hazards," said Putnam. "Quick time boys! These devils are trying to get in the rear."

They hurried forward. Certain ominous sounds on every side warned them that the enemy were close at hand. The men began to scatter. Only a silent guard of twenty men grouped themselves around the litter of Nattie. Among these was the major. Suddenly, from all around them, broke out at once the lurking foe. Grim faces hemmed them in on every hand. Tomahawks gleamed; knives were drawn, and a fearful combat began. The air seemed to be alive with missiles of every description. The Rangers fought as only they could fight. To the surprise of every one, the enemy avoided an attack

upon the men about the litter. Some chivalrous feeling, for which they could not account, induced even the savages to respect it. While balls were glancing everywhere, Nattie was safe. The Rangers were beginning to waver. Pressed on three sides by Moran, Chartier and the St. Regis, they yielded with sullen reluctance, fighting inch by inch. Seely could not stand that. A few men might turn the scale. Whispering a word in the ear of Jake, he left him and five men in charge of Nattie, and with the remainder of the guard, plunged into the fight.

The enemy greeted the reinforcement by cries of defiance. But, they soon found that a strong arm had been added to the defenders. His sword was death to any who assailed him. With the exception of one man, known as the Silent Carabine, he was the best swordsman in that army. Three Frenchmen attacked him, one after the other. Of these three, one was thrust through the heart, the other two wounded, one desperately. The French began to recoil before him.

All at once a murmur ran through their ranks, and a lofty form darted to the front. Seely felt a thrill as he saw that this was the giant chief! He had heard many tales of his wonderful strength, but had never seen him face to face until now.

"Why does the white man pause?" he said. "Has he never looked upon the face of a great chief?"

The involuntary pause which the young man had made was not in fear, for he believed that science could prevail even over the great force of the enemy. But, it was the attitude of the chief, and his noble and imposing figure, which attracted his attention. The strong right hand held a hatchet such as few could swing, and this was reddened to the very end of the handle. The giant had not been idle in the bloody work of that day. He had thrown off all that could by any possibility impede him in his work, and stood forth in all the grandeur of his mighty strength.

"I do not pause in fear," said Seely. "Are you ready?"

"A chief is always ready," replied the Indian.

They closed with desperate determination. For a few moments nothing was heard but the sharp clink of the sword of Seely, as it warded off the terrible blows showered upon him.

by that mighty arm. Twice that pliant steel, slipping in under the guard of the Indian, had drawn his blood. He had learned, for the first time, that something besides brute force is needed to contend against a practiced swordsman. The fighters in their immediate vicinity had paused, as if by mutual agreement, to witness the strife between their champions. The endurance of Seely was great. A practiced swordsman, his defense was so close that you could hardly note that his wrist moved at all.

And yet the blade flashed from side to side, keeping off the blows rained upon him by the giant. Again the blue steel drank blood, and Seely was pushing his advantage, when his attention was drawn another way. The battle had receded from his immediate vicinity, and now surrounded the litter of Nattie.

"Let me go, chief," said he. "In that litter is the woman I love. Let me defend her."

"Is she your squaw?" demanded the chief.

"She will be," said Seely, "if she lives."

"Go," said the chief. And turning on his heel, he plunged into the thickest of the fight.

Seely sprung toward the litter. But, he was too late; the guard already had been overpowered, and Nattie had been hurried into the woods, a prisoner!

It is impossible to describe the rage of the major. The wounded girl needed the best of care, and now she had been hurried by rough and brutal hands into unknown danger. He sprung after the now retreating French, when fires seemed to flash before his eyes, and he fell. When he woke, he was being carried in a blanket in the midst of the troop. Raising his hand to his head, he took it away bloody. His hair was soaked by the sanguine tide. Jake bent over him.

"What is it, major?"

"I don't understand," he said. "Tell me how I was hit."

"I reckon Bill Eagan knows how it was done," said Jake. "I just got a glimpse of him as he stuck his rifle out and fired at you. The ball cut a furrer along the top of yer head. 'Twas a clost shave, I judge."

"Where is Nattie?"

"Don't ask me," said Jake, gloomily. "I'd 'a done any thing fer that poaty critter."

"Where is she, I say?"

"Captered, meejor; captered. Nobody could help it. Ef I ever fit hard in my life I fit then. But, what could five men do ag'in' thirty or forty?"

"Who led them?"

"Bill Eagan."

"The scoundrel! Do you think he will harm her?"

"Not while she's wounded. I guess he means to keep her clost till she gits well."

"Then what?"

"Then he'll marry her, I reckon."

The major bounded from the blanket with a wolfish look on his face. Jake could never remember to have seen him look like that. An unnatural light showed itself in his eyes.

"That man's days are numbered if we ever meet," he said.

"He won't be likely to come in yer way. He's got what he's been fitein' for. He'll jine the Injins, that's what he'll do. He's got Injin blood in his veins, that I know."

"Can nothing be done?" moaned the major. "This is terrible."

"We can't do nothin'," said Jake. "I wish I was knocked on the head; but I don't s'pose I could git no good Christian to do the job for me, nohow."

They marched on in sullen silence. The major refused to return to the litter. He had an uneasy, whirling sensation in his head, but he overcame it and went on. Little did he care if the next bullet laid him low.

He loitered, and attempted to pass to the rear. But, Jake Dowdle was on the watch, and notified Putnam, who ordered him to the front.

"If I thought it would do any good for you to go back, I would not be the man to stop you," said old Put. "But, it is as plain as any one cares to see it that the girl is gone. Then why should you risk your life?"

"I love her, Putnam."

"I'm sorry for you, major. But, what can we do?"

"Nothing, Putnam. I don't blame you, of course. But, it is hard."

"Ha!" cried Putnam. "What is that?"

A white handkerchief was waving from a pole, in the hands of a man who stood on the other side of an opening through which they had just passed.

"Some Indian deviltry," said Jake. "Look out for them."

"No," said Putnam. "That is a Frenchman. By Jove, I think it is the captain you had the passage at arms with this morning."

"So it is! We can trust him. Let me go and see what he wants."

The other gave his consent and Seely quickly crossed the intervening space to meet the captain. That nonchalant individual received him with a calm smile.

"I beg your pardon, my worthy sir," he said. "But, I was under the impression that I could be of service to you."

"In what way?"

"You lost something in our last unpleasantness, did you not?"

"What do you mean?"

"A small matter. Nothing but a woman. But then, after all, these little women make a devilish deal of trouble in the world."

"You speak of a woman. Speak of her respectfully, for if it is the one I mean, she is to be my wife."

"With all the respect in life. I rather like you. Why should we hate one another? When we fight, let us fight like the devil. But, let us be gentlemen all the same. This lady was taken in our last attack."

"Yes, yes."

"The man who took her is no favorite of mine. In point of fact, he is a traitor to your side. Eagan is his name. He claimed the right to keep the prisoner. I objected. He persisted. I knocked him down."

"Give me your hand," said Seely. "You are a gentleman of honor and will not see a lady insulted. Since she is in good hands, I shall overlook the fact that she is a prisoner, until circumstances enable me to set her at liberty."

"Why need you wait?"

"I do not understand you."

"We do not war against women. The poor girl is wounded. I pity her and would have saved her from that traitor at any rate. But, she is of no use to us, therefore I have brought her back. Jacques! Perriot!"

Two men emerged from the thicket, carrying Nattie on the same litter which the major had prepared for her.

"Do you mean to tell me, monsieur capitaine, that you give her back to me without ransom?" demanded the young man, almost beside himself with joy.

"Certainly. Call two or three of your men, and carry her into camp."

The major wound his bugle, using an old signal, which the men understood. Six men came out on a run, and lifted the litter from the ground.

"How can I thank you enough, monsieur?"

The major's words were trembling with feeling.

"Do not say any more, as a favor to me," said the other. "Mademoiselle, I can give you no idea of my desolation in being obliged to send you away. It is terrible. Permit me to kiss your hand."

He performed the salute with the grace with which only the educated Frenchman knows, and the litter was carried away. The major lingered a moment.

"Don't thank me again," said the captain. "Look to your command. I give you ten minutes' start, and after that look out for us again."

"Thank you," said the major. "We shall be prepared."

He returned to his men, who were waiting for him, and who received him and Nattie with stentorian cheers.

"Get ready, boys," cried he. "We must be out of this as soon as possible. Forward, quick time. The men who guarded the litter before, take their places. Are you comfortable, Miss Weston?"

"More than that," she said. "I am happy."

"On, then, boys!"

They passed through the woods, and came into the opening upon which they had landed. The army was already embarking with all possible expedition. Jake said something to his leader in a low tone, and then ran quickly back upon the

trail, beyond the skirmish-line. Here he mounted a tree, high enough to overlook the next opening, which extended through the woods like a cañon through a mountain-range, for nearly two miles. He loaded his rifle carefully and waited.

Fifteen minutes passed, and Indians began to appear peeping from the cover far to the right and left, upon the flanks of the French force. Immediately after came the force which under Captain Jean and Wenona, had been the immediate pursuers. The scout caught a glance of the giant form of the latter, then of Captain Jean, and at last of the man he sought, Bill Eagan. The deadly rifle was laid across a branch ; a moment of deathlike stillness ensued ; then followed a rifle-crack. Bill Eagan, bending forward like a hound upon the trail, uttered a single yell, and fell dead, with a bullet in his brain.

As the brave scout dropped from the tree, a tall Indian darted at him, tomahawk in hand.

Jake advanced his left foot and whirled the rifle over his head. In vain was the interposition of the red-man's gun. Down went the savage under the heavy blow, and Jake plunged into the thicket, closely pursued by the outlying warriors. He came into camp, flushed by running, and made his way to the place where Major Seely stood. A short question and answer passed between them.

"Well?" said the major.

"Done," replied Jake.

"Very good," said the major. "Exit Bill Eagan, murderer and traitor. Let his name be forgotten from this hour."

## CHAPTER XI.

AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.

THE defeated army passed down the lake. The major was always beside the brave girl. Immediately upon arriving at Edward he obtained leave of absence, and, having persuaded Jake that it was the best plan, had Nattie conveyed, under escort, to his own home near Albany. Here his mother, a fine old lady, and his sister, a beautiful girl about Nattie's age, received the sufferer kindly, and were unremitting in their attentions even before the major told her story. After that, nothing was too good for her. It is no wonder, after such nursing, if she recovered quickly. In a month she was able to sit up in an easy-chair, and join in the family amusements.

The major then had been gone some days, but, during a temporary lull in the war, he again returned. He found her sitting on the veranda, looking out upon the silent Hudson. He came upon her so quietly that she did not see him. She was looking at something intently, nestling down among her pillows. He peeped over her shoulder. They were little articles which he had given her: a locket, a brooch, a silver knife and the like. He thought she looked more beautiful than ever. The brown tint, incurred by exercise and exposure on land and lake, was gone, leaving her skin fair and smooth. The hand which was toying with his presents was comely enough for a duchess.

"Nattie!"

She looked up; a little scream and the blush of young maidenhood betrayed the intensity of her joy, and revealed, as by a message, the truth: before him was the girl whom he had met and protected on the Mohawk. A pallor came into his face.

"It was *you*! it was *you*! Ah, Nattie, I know you now; I have searched for you vainly. Did you know me all the time?"

"Yes, Major Seely," replied the little woman in a half whisper.

"Do you remember," he softly said, taking her hand in his, "what you stated to me in the character of Willie Leslie, in the block-house on Lake George?"

"I made so many foolish remarks then that it is asking too much to expect me to remember them all," rejoined Nattie, blushing. "Do not hold my hand, please!"

"I remember well what you said that day," said the major, still retaining her hand. "You said, 'If you knew this girl, perhaps you could win her love.'"

"I must go away," said Nattie, trying to rise, and falling back again. "I am grateful to you, sir. You have been very kind to me, but it is better for me to go away."

"You shall never leave me," replied the young man, getting possession of her other hand. "Will you not understand that I love you and wish to make you my wife?"

"Your mother—your sister? I could not be ungrateful to them."

"They already love you dearly, and will love you better when you are my wife."

Of course she yielded; and he had her promise that when the campaign ended, she would be his wife. Had she not loved him all the time with a love transcending all ordinary modes of expression?

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Jake Dowdle pretended to be extremely angry at his superior for stealing away his ward, but he chuckled over it in secret. He remained with the army, a faithful soldier to the end. Upon that memorable day, when Wolfe died upon the plains of Abraham, at the end of that hard-won battle, he saw an Indian lying at the base of a little hill, wounded. A single glance at his face and figure showed that it was Wenona. A man who was stooping over him rose feebly.

"Don't touch him," he said. "Though an Indian, he is my friend."

Jake recognized Captain Jean, and saw that he was badly wounded.

"Don't fear on my account," returned Jake. "The battle is over. Kin I do any thing for you?"

"Get a surgeon for Wenona," the Frenchman replied. "I can wait."

Jake looked once at the set face of the chief. He was not the man to forget the truly brave. He ran for a surgeon, and in the search also found Seely and sent him to them. The surgeon, examining the wound, pronounced it dangerous. For four days either Seely or his scout sat by the bedside of the brave savage; then the crisis was passed, and he was pronounced out of danger.

In a week more he was able to go about, though enfeebled. As soon as possible, he was allowed to depart—a free man, Captain Jean, Seely, and Jake accompanied him to the river, where his canoe lay.

"Jean," said the chief, taking the hand of the Frenchman, and pressing it to his breast, "Wenona goes. You will go away over the great sea-water, and the chief will never again see your face. But remember that his heart is always warm toward you."

Chartier bade him an affectionate farewell. The others came forward to bid him good-by.

"Yengees," said he, "our wars are over. You have been just to the Indian. I must be friends with you, for in your hands is the safety of my people. Good-by."

The canoe was pushed out into the stream. None of those who watched its course ever saw his face again.

"Go your ways, Wenona," spoke the Frenchman. "You are as brave a man, as true a friend, as determined a foe, Indian or white, as ever trod the earth. The war is ended; Montcalm is dying, and here am I!"

"What will you do?" asked Seely.

"Return to France. Our hope of empire here is at an end. We have done what we could; all is lost. I am a soldier no more!"

"Before you go," said Seely, "let me ask you a question. Who killed Ned Weston, at the island in Lake George?"

"Bill Eagan. He snatched up his own rifle and fired. Who killed *him*?"

Jake nodded and laid his hand significantly on his breast.

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The story is ended. Charles Seely and his wife loved

each other too well to live unhappy. And as children grew up about them, Jake Dowdle loved to come sometimes and talk over old deeds with the major, and tell the children stories of their mother's heroism. Every year they received messages and presents from Captain Jean, who then had come into his estate in France, and who remained up to his death their constant friend.

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Ma-try-Money. An Acting Charade.  
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The Irishman at Home. For two males.  
Fashionable Requirements. For three girls.  
A Revy of I's (Eyes). For eight or less little girls.

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The Libel Suit. For two females and one male.  
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Woman's nature will out. For a girls' school.  
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